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GREAT HEIGHTS GAINED
BY STEADY EFFORTS

LEARN
TO
LABOUR
AND
TO WAIT

OF PERSEVERANCE
& FAITHFULNESS TRIUMPHANT





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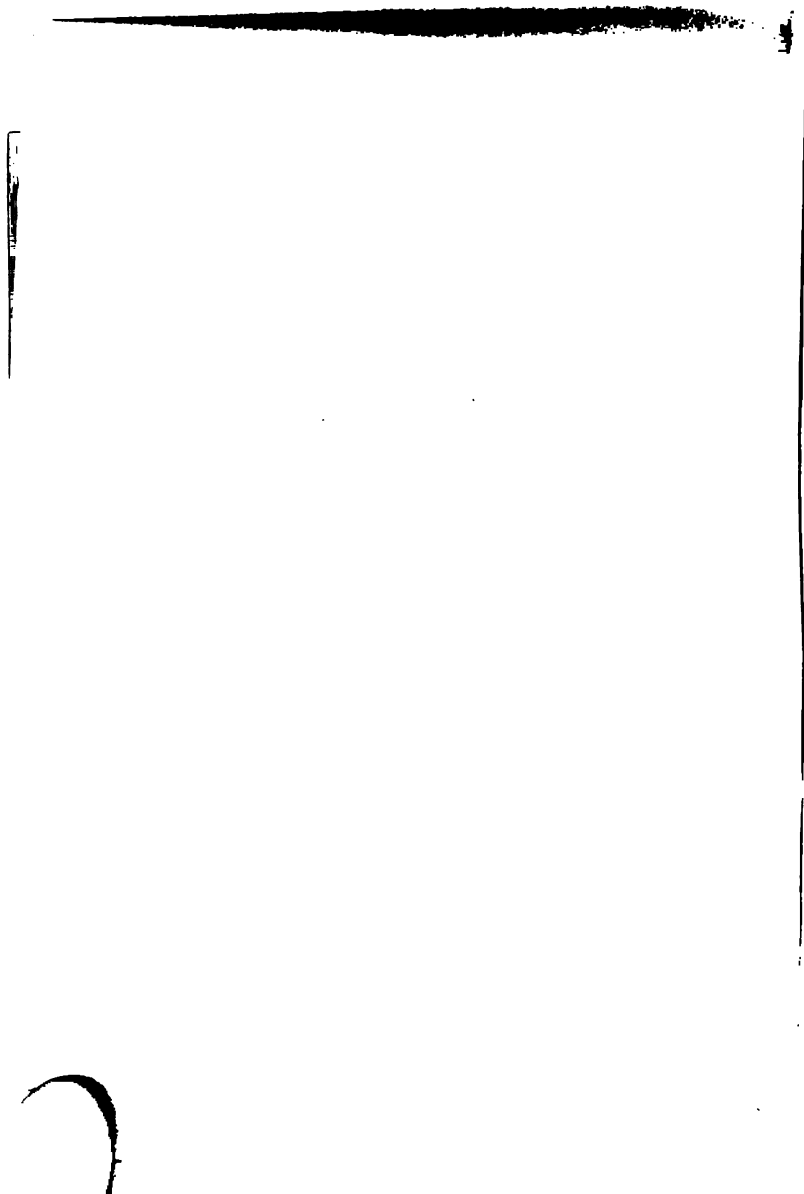




THE BIRTH-DAY GIFT.

Page 53.





GREAT HEIGHTS GAINED BY STEADY EFFORTS.



MRS. GRUMMERLY'S ADVICE.

Page 92.

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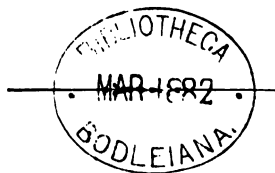
OR,

Perseverance and Faithfulness Triumphant.

BY THE

REV. T. P. WILSON, M.A.,
(*Vicar of Pavenham.*)

AUTHOR OF "TRUE TO HIS COLOURS," "FRANK OLDFIELD."
ETC. ETC.



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GREAT HEIGHTS
GAINED BY STEADY EFFORTS.



decipher the words, so niggardly is the allowance of light which enters the room through two small leaded casements, which have been rendered yet more dim by scraps of stained and clouded glass, which have been carefully and lovingly inserted by the hands of the admiring John himself. Such is the principal room, into which the visitor enters at once through a little rustic porch.

But there is also an inner room of nearly equal size, which is fuller still of all sorts of curiosities ancient and modern, chiefly the former. The pride of this apartment, however, is an enormous fourpost bedstead, which was originally taller than at present, as the low ceiling of the room it now graces made curtailment of the posts a necessity. Certainly a marvellous work of art is this bedstead, its panels being wrought into Scripture scenes by the graving tool, and the whole structure bristling in every direction with little oaken points, causing you almost to shudder as you look at it; and the thought suggests itself, What prospect of waking up with a whole skin would there be for any restless mortal who might lay him down at night on such a couch? Not that any member of the family ever dreamt of seeking sleep or rest on this bedstead. A suit of armour, worn by some stout soldier in the time of one of the Henries, lies stretched in mock repose on

hills" as he shows the way into his workshop. Ah! that workshop is well worth seeing. Hitherto the stranger has been gazing on the works of olden time, now he is to see the handiwork of John Totts himself. What a strange array of tools! Yes, they have been fashioned by the carver's own hands; he has shaped and formed them himself, that he may be able to get at places which would be entirely inaccessible to an ordinary carver. But John is not an ordinary carver; not a scrap of his work may be done imperfectly. So he is often to be found toiling away at some piece of tracery which will never meet human eye when once it has been fixed in its proper place in some hidden nook out of sight; and this work he will execute with as much care as though other eyes than those of mice and beetles would be able hereafter to rest upon it. The visitor must needs express his admiration as he looks at the specimens of John's skill and patience which crowd the little workshop on all sides. To this the good carver will reply with a smile, a grunt, and a shrug of the shoulders, meaning thereby that the words of delighted surprise on the part of his visitor are more than his due; for in John Totts there dwells that humility which so often characterizes true genius.

Such, then, were John Totts, his house, and his workshop, at the time when our story opens. Of

course such a man would not be appreciated nor understood by all his neighbours. Some of these hardly thought him sane ; while others would "poke fun" at him in various ways. One even took the trouble to cut out from a child's picture-book and send to him the coloured caricature of an old *virtuoso* with the following verses printed underneath :—

"Cousin Ralph, the connoisseur,
Lived at Florence to be sure :
He loved things as old as Moses,—
Images with broken noses,
Copper coins that wouldn't pass,
And smoky pictures. What an ass!"

But John Totts was not an ass. Nevertheless, he was highly delighted with the verses, and fastened them, picture and all, over his bench in his workshop, considering himself rather flattered than otherwise by being compared to so distinguished an antiquary as "Cousin Ralph."

· CHAPTER II.

JOHN TOTTS'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.



JOHN TOTTS had been so accustomed to value things by their age—his admiration of an article rising with the number of years from which it had come down to him—that he felt a considerable addition to his own self-respect on the morning when his own life had just completed half a century.

John kept a journal, and a strange-looking book it was. Its covers once belonged to some ancient classic, which had, either accidentally or intentionally, been subjected to such bad usage that not a single leaf remained whole. John had seen it in its mutilated plight sticking out of a basket in the shop of a second-hand bookseller; and having taken a fancy to it from the venerable look of its exterior, had bought it for twopence, and turned it into a journal, when he had taken out the printed matter, and had replaced it by a similar quantity of blank

sombre-tinted paper. The entries made in this journal were exceedingly miscellaneous, consisting, however, principally of the records of curious things seen, said, heard, read, or acquired by the carver himself on the days when these entries were made. Thus an antiquarian conversation with some learned brother enthusiast, who had honoured him with a visit, would occupy a page or so. Then would come an elaborate description of some medieval cup which had been brought under his notice on the day of entry. Now and then the names of some distinguished visitors were noted, and any remarks made by them which struck him; and possibly even an abstract of a discussion which he had held with my Lord this, or the Bishop of that, for John was a most fearless defender of his own views on all subjects. Occasionally, too, he would mark down in this diary any event in the history of himself, of his friends, or of the neighbourhood, which he might consider of more than ordinary interest: so that this journal became a source of much pleasure and entertainment to many others besides himself; for the carver purposely kept all secrets out of it, and allowed any of his friends or neighbours who had a mind to do so to look into it. Nor was it without its use in a higher sense; for John Totts, finding that mere idle curiosity prompted many of

the thoughtless to ask for a sight of it, had inserted every here and there short extracts from the writings of old divines and other good men, whose works he had the opportunity of consulting occasionally in the libraries of his wealthier patrons. And some of these extracts were made by him because they bore upon the more prominent sins of the day or of his own neighbourhood ; so that many a smart rebuke was by these extracts silently administered to some who little expected to find in this journal a personal home-thrust to their own consciences.

Now, on his fiftieth birthday John made an entry of the fact in these words: "I, John Totts, have this day completed half a century of my mortal life. Where shall I be when the half century has become a century? and where shall we all of us be another century hence? Ay, there's the rub. 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.'" This entry he made early in the morning, before breakfast. But before night fell, another and most unexpected circumstance had to be recorded.

It was summer-time—midsummer, in fact—for John Totts was born on the 21st of June. Himself and his wife were busy all the morning in their hay, which had been cut a day or two before. As they drew near their house for the noonday

meal, a strange sound fell on their ears. A baby's cry issued from their dwelling. Perhaps some neighbour was wanting to speak with one of them, and had brought her infant with her. But it was not so. As they stepped over the threshold, and looked into the outer room, there was no one to be seen; however, there was abundance of sound to be heard. A baby's lamentation in full power was issuing from some place in the apartment. What could it mean? They hurried forward, and found under the window a large basket covered over with a lid, pierced with several openings, through one of which was stretched out a delicate little hand. John Totts lifted the basket, which shook violently with the struggles of the imprisoned infant. There was a large card on the lid, and on this card were written, in thick Old English characters, with the capitals coloured red, the words, *A Birthday Present for Mr. John Totts.*

The carver and his wife were both dreadfully dismayed as he read these words aloud. But now the poor child's cries and struggles made them forget everything else for a time, except the little creature and its distress. John Totts had soon cut the fastenings of the lid, and his wife having tenderly removed a flannel coverlet of the finest quality, there appeared a sweet little face, with the neatest of

caps enclosing it, while the deep-blue eyes, which were brimming over with tears, lighted up, and the little mouth expanded into a smile. "Bless its little heart! it's a beauty, wherever it comes from," cried Mrs. Totts, as she carefully took the babe from its nest and pressed it to her bosom.

There was a letter pinned to the baby's dress, written in a bold hand, and addressed "John Totts, Esq." John tore it open, and read aloud as follows :—

"MR. TOTTS,—This comes wishing you many happy returns of your birthday. You are fond of curiosities, so an admirer of yours sends you a living curiosity, which he feels sure you will take great care of. If she is not very old now—being just six weeks—she will mend in that respect every day you keep her, and become a piece of antiquity in due time."

There was neither signature nor date to this letter.


The carver and his wife then searched the basket very thoroughly, but found no clew. The articles of clothing and the wraps were of the very best materials; and in a little shoe, which was tucked down at the foot of the basket, there was something

done up in a piece of silver paper. They opened it, and found it to contain a beautiful pearl necklace, suited only for a grown-up person. But yet there were no marks on this necklace, nor anything fastened to it, which could lead in any way to a discovery of the parents or friends of the helpless little one thus cast on the love and care of John Totts and his wife.

And now, what was to be done? This was clearly no common hoax. A person designing merely to play off a practical joke on the carver would never have carried things so far. There was real, earnest, and deliberate wrong-doing, too, in the person who had conveyed the infant, or caused it to be conveyed, in its helplessness, to a stranger's home.

Two courses were open to the carver and his wife, if they wished to free themselves of such an unlooked-for charge. They could take the child, basket and all, to the Union, and leave it there, and so relieve themselves; or they could advertise in the papers, inviting the proper guardians of the infant, whether parents or others, to come and take it off their hands. But somehow they shrank from either course. They could not bear the thought of delivering up the tender little creature to the people at the workhouse; and as for advertising, it seemed to both John and his wife that this, most probably, would

avail nothing. Curiosity would be excited, and their house would be pestered with crowds of open-mouthed inquirers, but very unlikely would it be that the real parents would come to claim their child. It might be that the mother was herself putting away her babe, and handing over the care of it to another, for some mysterious reason. Or it might be that the poor innocent little thing had been stolen away from its parents in some distant land, out of revenge, and then brought by the wrong-doer to a spot where, of all others, it would be least likely to be sought for. At any rate, John Totts and his wife came to the conclusion pretty quickly that they would not make public in any way the strange manner in which they had come by their little visitor. Of course, if a proper claimant for the child should turn up, and be able to substantiate the claim, that would be all right; but, till that should take place, they would do nothing of their own accord towards turning out of their house one who had found a home there in its pitiful helplessness. Such was the conclusion to which John and his wife came. Five minutes' talk brought them to it. The babe should be treated by them as theirs till it found a home with its own kith and kin. And Mrs. Totts set to work at once to act the part of mother to the new-comer.



There was one piece of ancient wood-work in the house which she prized more than all the rest of her husband's valuables and curiosities put together. But it had not seen broad daylight for many years. This was a baby's cradle. It was a singular structure, carved most beautifully by John Totts himself, and was made by him of choice old oak, which he had picked up at a sale, and which might very possibly have once graced the dining-hall of some old Saxon thane or Norman baron. It was almost as black as ink, and highly polished. The rockers to this cradle were made with long projecting ends, fashioned by the carver's skilful hands to represent the heads of swans; while on the front of the wooden hood or canopy he had cut the first two lines of Watts' hymn,—

“ Hush, my babe ! lie still and slumber ;
Holy angels guard thy bed.”

It was a rare piece of workmanship ; but neither the carver nor his wife had ever brought it downstairs since the day when their own little one, for whom it had been made, was laid in her grave. But now Mrs. Totts resolved that it should see the light once more, though a sharp pang shot through her heart as she came to this resolution. But she was not a woman to leave a thing undone because the doing of it would cause pain or even suffering

to herself. Show Mrs. Totts that it was right for her to do a thing, and the very earliest opportunity would find the thing done or set about, let the doing cost what it might. So, turning to her husband, when they had settled to keep the baby without making any inquiries, she said in a hoarse whisper, "John, I'm going to fetch down our Bessy's cradle."

Her husband was silent for a moment, while his features worked strongly. Then he said in a trembling voice, "Ay, do, mother; or rather, let me fetch it down for you."

She did not refuse his offer, and in a few moments the old cradle was standing by the open window, ready for its new tenant.

With a trembling hand Mrs. Totts arranged the bed-clothes in it, adding from a drawer long disused such articles as might increase the baby's comfort. Ah! it was indeed a work of holy, self-denying love, to bring forth those things which had once belonged to that mother's own departed darling, and which were more precious to her than gold or jewels, nor were ever to be parted with whilst herself lived. Thick and fast fell her tears as she turned these treasures again to use; but she was content, and satisfied that these valued relics had been reserved for their present service, little as she could ever have dreamed of such a thing. John Totts was also

satisfied ; and, as he went forth to look after his hay, he glanced back on his wife with mingled smiles and tears, as the sight of her kneeling by that old cradle caused a multitude of tender memories to crowd into his heart.

That night, before they went to bed, the carver and his wife came to a thorough understanding as to what they were to do and to say concerning the child. Of course this addition to their family would soon be no secret. Neighbours must know that they had the child, and neighbours' tongues would therefore be busy about it. If the little one was left to be brought up by them, they must give her a name, and account to inquiring friends and acquaintance for their having the care of her. Though not bound, indeed, to gratify public curiosity, nevertheless they would find it expedient to tell the outer world so much about the poor babe as would save themselves from being worried by all sorts of slander and gossip on the subject. So, after due consideration and discussion, they resolved that it should be replied to all inquirers that John had made up his mind to adopt the baby for his own, to save it from being sent to the workhouse ; but whose it was, or where it came from, he knew no more than his neighbours. It had been left with him, and he had no intention of refusing it a home.

Then, as to the baby's name. "Let it be something plain and homely," said the carver to his wife, "and then we shall not set the gossips a-gaping. Let her be Sarah Jones. They can't make much out of that." Perhaps Mrs. Totts would have liked something a little more refined; but she saw that there was good sense in her husband's remark, so she acquiesced, after a few moments' pause, and Sarah Jones became the name of the adopted little one.

The following entry for this day was made in the carver's journal: "This day the Lord sent me a birthday present which we little expected. Sarah Jones was committed to our care, unless we preferred to hand her over to the Union; but that could not be, so we have adopted her as our own." Of course it was inevitable that the new baby's sudden entrance into the carver's family should form a nine days' wonder; but as no amount of dexterous questioning could get more information on the subject out of either John Totts or his wife than was recorded in the journal, Curiosity gradually cooled down, and sought her food elsewhere.

CHAPTER III.


MRS. GRUMMERLY.



HAVING fully accepted his birthday present, John Totts was prepared to turn it to the best account. Months passed by, but no one came to claim the little stranger; nor did a whisper reach the ears of either the carver or his wife such as might turn them in the direction of discovering the child's parentage. And, indeed, by the time winter had clothed the earth with a mantle of snow, the little one had crept so deeply down into the hearts both of the good man and his wife, that the last thing that would now have been welcome to them would be the coming forward of any one who could establish a better right to the poor infant than they had. Then came spring and summer again, and then another birthday for John; but not with it a similar birthday present, though, strangely enough, Mrs. Totts had a sort of curious expectation—perhaps it should

rather be called misgiving—that possibly they might find another basket with like contents on their return home at the dinner-hour. No such present, however, greeted them; but, instead of a second babe thrown upon their pity, they found an old woman seated under the window, just where the basket had been discovered a year ago.

This old woman was a Mrs. Grummerly, a widow of some sixty years of age, who had been born and brought up in the neighbourhood, and was now living in a little cottage not far from the carver's dwelling. She was the daughter of a plain working man, and had gone early to service in the family of a baronet; in which situation she had remained about twenty years, and at the end of that time had married a small farmer, one of the baronet's tenants. A few more years found her a childless widow; but the baronet's lady would not hear of her going into the Union, and took her back into her service as housekeeper. In a comparatively short time both her master and her mistress died; but they had not forgotten her, the baronet having left her a small annuity, which enabled her to live above want in her native parish, and afforded her leisure to go about among her neighbours,—which she did with a frequency more gratifying to herself than to them. Not that the old woman was an



ordinary gossip or tale-bearer, for she believed what the Bible says about tale-bearing, and had no wish to be a mischief-maker. What made her seldom a welcome visitor was that she was much given to offer advice unsolicited, and to contrast openly what she saw in other people's houses with what her own experience had made her believe to be a better way. To none was she so unacceptable as to John Totts and his wife; not only because she was always finding something in the carver's rather eccentric premises about which she would suggest alteration or improvement, but more especially because she was the direct opposite to John himself in her estimate of the comparative value of things new and old. *Old-fashioned* was with her the same as *ill-fashioned*; and "antiquated" was a term which she uttered in a tone of deep scorn. Besides this, there was a subject on which she and the carver were at complete disagreement. John was very fond of quoting proverbs, which, like all other things valuable in his estimation, were commonly prized in proportion to their age. Mrs. Grummerly, on the contrary, had a great dislike to proverbs in general, and to ancient ones in particular, declaring that most of them were little better than lies, misleading instead of instructing, and were quite at variance with the experience of our better-informed generation, being

often merely the sayings of some ignorant wiseacres whose sphere of observation was exceedingly limited. She made an exception in the case of the proverbs of Scripture; for she had a firm belief in her Bible as an inspired and infallible revelation. But these Scripture proverbs, she used to say, were the last that people in these days ever thought of guiding their lives by. Such was the visitor whom John Totts found seated in his outer room on his coming in to his dinner on his fifty-first birthday.

"Many happy returns of the day, Mr. Totts!" she exclaimed as he entered. "I hope you're getting your hay in well this rather changeable weather."

"Thankee, Mrs. Grummerly," was his reply. "I shan't do amiss. I've had two or three extra helpers; and you know, as the proverb says, 'Many hands make light work.'"

"The proverb may say what it likes," replied the other tartly, "but it don't tell true, at least in *my* experience. For instance, I'd a lot of young people helping me with some needlework the other day, and heavy work it turned out for me instead of light work: it was so badly done that I had to unpick every bit of it, and do it all over again with my one pair of hands."

"Ah, well, my good lady," said John laughing,

"there's an exception, no doubt, to every rule; but the exception only confirms the rule."

Mrs. Grummerly made no reply to this, but asked, "And what are you going to do with little Sarah? I see she is beginning to toddle about a bit. You'll never surely keep her in this old-fashioned place? Why, the poor thing will be moped to death; or else, with all these fusty things round her, she'll shrivel up into an Egyptian mummy."

But here Mrs. Totts interposed with some warmth. "Indeed, Mrs. Grummerly, we shall do our duty by the child. She's not likely to shrivel up in this fine country air. We are not going to keep her boxed up among the old things. Why, bless her little heart, she's as fresh and as sweet as a new-blown rose; and I don't see why we shouldn't keep her so."

"Ah, well, Mrs. Totts," said the other, "I meant no harm; only I couldn't help feeling sorry for the poor little thing if its head is to be stuffed, as it grows older, with your good husband's antiquated notions. I think I can see her now, as she will be perhaps five years hence, dressed up as you see young children in some of those pictures in the old galleries, looking as stiff and starched as if she had been cut out of pasteboard."

"Never fear about that," cried John laughing.

"You're getting on too fast, ma'am. Five years hence is a long way off yet. We shall be guided to do what is right by little Sarah, I've no doubt."

"I hope so, Mr. Totts," said the visitor; "but be sure you don't spoil her. I can't bear spoiled children."

"Nor I neither, Mrs. Grummerly," replied John. "We must look above for light and wisdom; and then we may expect a blessing, as it is said in the Proverbs, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.'"

"Yes, that's true," said the old woman, "because it comes from the Bible; and yet I don't think there's a proverb so often abused as that: though it's true, of course, in itself, yet it's false in the way people take it. People expect the blessing while they don't use the means."

"I quite agree with you there," said the carver sadly. "I've noticed it over and over again; but I trust that we shall have wisdom given us to take the proverb in the right way. We must be patient and persevering, and go with 'line upon line, and precept upon precept;' and it may be that the child will arrive at something good and great by little steps. You know the proverb says, 'Rome wasn't built in a day.'"

"And a very stupid proverb too," cried the other.

"Why, who needs a proverb to tell him that any city, or town, or village, or house wasn't built in a single day?"

"Softly, softly, there, Mrs. Grummerly; there's many a useful lesson to be learned by giving heed to the simplest illustrations. However, we must do our best, as I said, and God will help us to mould our little Sarah into a noble character. We must watch our opportunities, and think nothing unimportant that can influence her for good; for, as a shrewd observer has it in a well-known proverb, 'Trifles light as straws are levers in the building up of character.'"

"Ah, there now!" exclaimed Mrs. Grummerly; "there's some sense in that. That's a *modern* proverb. You got it from Martin Tupper, a writer of our own day. Stick by that, and you won't go far wrong; but don't be aiming too high for the child."

"Too high!" exclaimed John Totts; "how can that be? Ought not we, as Christians, to aim as high as we can?"

"That's not what I was meaning, Mr. Totts. Don't you think to turn Miss Sarah Jones into a genius—that's what I mean. Keep her low, keep her humble."

"I don't know about that," said the carver

seriously. "If she shows any special talent as she grows older, I don't see why we should not try to bring it out."

"Don't you, John Totts? Well, I do. If I hate one thing more than another, it is what they call emulation. People are not content with shining; they want all of them to blaze."

"That may be, Mrs. Grummerly, but I think there's a happy middle path without going to either extreme. Why shouldn't we follow that path, and go on mounting higher and higher in any pursuit which God has given us ability to shine in?"

"Yes—till you tumble headlong over a precipice and come to grief, or else get full of 'envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness,' when any one outstrips you," cried the old woman with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Well, Mr. and Mrs. Totts," she added, but not in the sweetest of voices, "I wish you good-day, and plenty of light to guide you." Having said which, she disappeared, well satisfied with herself, believing that she had left behind her some good advice where it was much needed; while the carver and his wife, after a sigh of relief, soon forgot the old woman and her notions in the doing, with all earnestness, of their parental duties.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATIONAL.



TEN years from John Totts's memorable fiftieth birthday slipped rapidly by. At their close there was added light in his dwelling, which compensated a hundredfold for any shadows cast by new cares and responsibilities. That light was the light which flowed from the love and the life of a holy child. John Totts himself seemed rather to have put back the hand of his life's timepiece. Few would have taken him now for sixty—so hale and bright and cheery was he. Sarah Jones was the joy of his heart: her presence was as sunshine to his eyes; her voice as music in his ears. Nor was she less a delight to Mrs. Totts. And now, how was she to be educated?

John was determined that she should be brought up very differently from the children he saw all round about him. So he fished out of an old chest

a work on education, dated somewhere in the sixteenth century, and studied it very carefully. This book had for a frontispiece the effigies of a model child with its hands behind its back, in the act of saying a lesson, the first words of which were to be seen enclosed in an oval to the right of the child's head connected with its mouth by two converging lines, so that these words were manifestly represented as issuing from the scholar's lips. On a little table at the back of the picture was an hour-glass, and beside it a substantial birch rod. Beneath was the inscription, "*Ye Diligente Childe.*"

Now the carver happened to possess a little old oak table with turned legs, just like the one in the frontispiece. He also had amongst his curiosities an ancient hour-glass, just such a time-measurer as stood on a shelf or bracket by the Puritan preacher's pulpit; and John used to tell his visitors, when he exhibited it, "Perhaps this is the very glass which was used by that quaint old divine, who loved his joke even when delivering his sermon, and could not therefore forbear on one occasion, when he saw his hearers specially attentive, saying, as he turned the hour-glass over, 'I see you're all good fellows; so let us have another glass together.'" This curious old relic the carver placed on the little table, for which he had made room under the window of his outer

parlour. But what about the birch rod? Well, John Totts was one of those who are old-fashioned enough to take the Scriptures to mean literally what they say. So he procured a rod, though of considerably more moderate dimensions than that which was figured in the old print, and placed it by the hour-glass at lesson-times; and occasionally he used it, when little Sarah gave way to ill-temper or was wilful. But this chastisement was always administered very temperately, and never immediately after the wrong-doing; for it was a matter of principle with John Totts never to inflict corporal punishment till all feeling of irritation on his part had passed away. And the child soon came to understand and appreciate this—that when the rod was used, it was not because her father was angry, but because she herself was naughty. However, in a little time, the mere pointing to the rod was sufficient to check the rising temper, or to restrain from the act of self-will or disobedience; so that long before Sarah was ten years old this unsightly instrument of discipline had been transferred by Mrs. Totts, with her husband's consent, to the fire, where it performed the more pleasing service of stimulating the kettle to a speedier pouring forth of steam, as the flames blazed up from its bundle of sapless twigs. “Good-bye, rod!” cried Mrs. Totts

with much satisfaction.—“Good-bye, rod!” exclaimed Sarah with a merry laugh, and clapping her hands.—“Good-bye, rod!” said John more gravely. “We don’t want to see you back again; but you have been of good service for all that.”—And so it had been; for it had helped to teach that child the important difference between strictness and severity, and between the unrighteous love which is too weak to inflict merited and wholesome correction, and the true love which is too sincere and real to spare itself any pain or trouble which ought to be incurred in seeking and promoting the true and abiding happiness of the object loved. The child had come to understand this, and to respect her father for using the rod. And now, in the place where it used to lie, a genuine copy of the much-prized “Breeches Bible” was always to be seen; and to this appeal was constantly made by John Totts, and by his wife also. So that, when Sarah was now entered on her eleventh year, she was thoroughly used to have all things respecting duty and conduct referred to the judgment of God’s Word; and she knew that this always settled every question or difficulty.

And Sarah was a thoroughly happy child; happier, perhaps, than most children would have been in a home where there were no other children, for she

was in some respects a very peculiar child. This was no doubt in part owing to the surroundings of her home. Mrs. Grummerly would say to her neighbours, in a tone of deep disgust, "Well, I never did see such a child. She ain't like a child at all, at least not like children of such flesh and blood as ordinary people are made of. Why, John Totts is making her as old-fashioned as himself. It ain't any fault of hers, poor thing; it's all owing to her bringing up. Sometimes she looks for all the world just as if he had cut her out of one of his antiquated pieces of tapestry, and stuck her down among his worm-eaten boxes and tables. It's a real pity, for the child will never be fit for anything. But, there;—the whole lot of them look just as if they had been dead and dug up again. But it's no business of mine."

The child, however, had resources in herself which Mrs. Grummerly little dreamt of. No one of any real discernment could gaze on that thoughtful young face, at the time at which we have now arrived, without being struck by its intellectual beauty and deep-seated peace. No doubt the antiquities and quaint curiosities which met Sarah's eyes on all sides, from her earliest dawns of intelligence, had had much to do with her present cast of mind and habits of thought. She loved

the old cupboards, the dingy armour, the rusty weapons, the fantastic carvings. They more or less moulded both her waking musings and her nightly dreams; they shot a dark poetic thread through the imaginative fabrics she was always weaving to herself. Indeed, she lived in an atmosphere of vivid and ever-varying fancies. Nothing delighted her more than to hear from John Totts's lips, in the twilight of a winter's evening, when the sparks were sputtering from a huge log that rested on the metal dogs in the wide chimney, some historic tale of deeds of ancient valour and chivalry. Then, when she was alone after hearing one of these tales, she would throw back her spirit into those old times, and live over again, in her own person, a part in those romantic events. At last, as she looked around her, by day or by night, every old piece of furniture or carving, every separate time-worn curiosity, had for her its own tale or legend of ages gone by attached to it. And all John Totts's narratives were of things that had been; he never amused the child with mere fanciful stories.

All this time, however, the main thing was never forgotten by either the carver or his wife. Truly it was their constant aim to bring up their charge "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and

their efforts were fully blessed. For if Sarah loved her world of poetry and imagination much, she loved the world of spiritual realities more. To dwell in deep thought on a Saviour's love; to hold simple but real communion with him in prayer; to meditate on "the innumerable company of angels," on their present guardianship and future companionship; to picture to herself "the new heavens and the new earth;" to soar away in thought to the New Jerusalem;—these were her highest and most dear delights; for she *felt* both their unspeakable glory and their intense reality. Not that she was forward to speak of what was in her young heart either of things spiritual or of things merely imaginative and poetical; for she was naturally shy and reserved about such matters. That there was something more than common passing through that child's mind and pervading her spirit, was clear to any one who had the opportunity of watching her for a while when she was seated apart and unconscious of being observed.

Fair she was now in form and feature, when she had completed her tenth year, with a winning sweetness of look which fascinated every visitor to her humble home. As for John and his wife, they hardly dared realize to themselves how entirely she had won their warmest affection. True it was

that they felt more and more sure every day that she could not be the child of commonplace parents ; but what then ? Must the time come when they should have to part with her ? The thought was misery ! Well, they must make the most of such a treasure while she was counted as theirs. And oh, how thankful they were that, although they had no earthly fortune to leave her, they had been privileged to lead her to secure "the Pearl of great price," and the heavenly, unfading inheritance. Yes—there could be no doubt on this subject—truly was she on the road to the better land, to the heavenly city ; and, should it be that some day they should have to part with her here, they knew that they should meet her again in the home where there are no separations.

But even *they* could not wholly understand or appreciate her. As for "drawing her out," they never attempted it. Mrs. Grummerly tried it once, and only once. When Sarah was nine years old, she was seated one lovely summer's evening on a mossy stone which commanded a magnificent prospect of the distant hills. No one was near her at the time ; for she was returning home by a not much frequented field-path from a farm-house to which she had been sent by Mrs. Totts on an errand. Lingering for a while to rest herself, the charm of

the glorious landscape filled her spirit. All around was peace and beauty; while above the far-off hills, the setting sun was tinging, with the most vivid crimson and gold, a flock of little clouds which had gathered there as though to catch his parting glory. Tears filled the eyes of the enraptured child, and fervent words of admiration and praise flowed from her lips unrestrained and aloud, so that she was quite unconscious of any one approaching, till Mrs. Grummerly, having come close up to her from behind, and having seated herself on the rocky seat beside her, exclaimed, "Well, child, whatever are you doing, and whoever are you talking to? One would think you had lots of companions to speak to instead of being all alone; unless, indeed, you are talking to the swallows, but they aren't likely to pay much attention to you."

Sarah made no reply, but only blushed deeply, and looked very uncomfortable.

"Come, child, what is it?" continued the old woman pettishly: "you've got a tongue in your head, I know, for you've been using it just now pretty freely."

Sarah looked up—such a look! but without speaking.

Mrs. Grummerly was going on to scold her pretty sharply, but there was something in that look that

CHAPTER V.

THE ART PRIZE.



JOHN TOTTS and Sarah Jones kept their birthdays together ; for though Sarah was known to have been six weeks old when she was found by the carver, yet, as the exact date of her birth could not be ascertained, the day of her coming into the family was always observed as a high day, and kept as a joint birthday for father and child.

On the tenth anniversary of this unexpected addition to the inmates of his home, John found on his carpenter's bench, after breakfast, a parcel, wrapped up in brown paper, and directed, "For dear father—a keepsake from his loving child, Sarah." What could it be ? He opened the parcel with trembling hands. There was something hard inside covered up with soft paper. This inner envelope having been removed, a carved oak picture-frame appeared enclosing a design which for a

while puzzled as well as astonished John Totts. On a black background was pasted a representation of a shepherd leading his flock beside a river. This representation—for drawing it could not be called—was formed out of pure white paper, cut out with either penknife or scissors. The design was chaste and vigorous, and the figures admirably proportioned. Hills, meadows, shepherd with his crook, and a lamb in his arms, river, sheep in various positions, flowers and rushes—all were there; the shading having been effected by lines cut out in the white paper. In the left hand lower corner were the words, also cut out, “S. J., *fecit.*”

The carver gazed at this extraordinary work again and again, and every succeeding time with increasing wonder and admiration. But was this really Sarah's own handiwork? and, if so, was it an original, or a copy? And now he began to call to mind that, when the child was only three or four years old, she used to amuse herself by tearing pieces of white paper into rude but clever resemblances of men, women, dogs, and horses. He had also seen her, at a later period, cutting out little pictures of cottages with trees about them with her scissors, and had been struck with the neatness of the execution. But the present design was something far beyond those earlier attempts. The carved oak

frame he was not surprised at, for he had often himself given her a lesson in such work, and had been pleased to see how skilfully she had come to handle the graving tools. Still, he was not prepared to see such proficiency on her part as the frame now before him exhibited.

Having feasted his eyes for a long time on the unlooked-for gift, he took it into the house, where his wife and the child were busy making preparations for the noonday meal; for John Totts loved old-fashioned hours, and was not best pleased if at any time his dinner was not ready punctually at noon. And he loved that word "noon," and its kindred word "forenoon."

"Talk of modern improvements!" he said one day to Mrs. Grummerly. "Well, they haven't improved upon our good old Saxon language. There used to be 'noon,' and 'forenoon,' and 'afternoon,' and everybody could understand what these words meant. 'Noon' meant mid-day, of course; 'forenoon' meant any time in the morning before mid-day; and 'afternoon,' any time after mid-day till sunset. But now poor 'forenoon' has quite dropped out of fashion; they've got 'morning' in its place, which may mean any time between breakfast and dinner, even when folks don't dine till six or seven o'clock in the evening. I'm sure there's no

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improvement here; I only wish the gentlefolks would bring back good old 'forenoon' into use again."

"Nay, Mr. Totts," exclaimed the other; "surely you would not have us go back to those vulgar old Saxons and their words and ways."

"Just listen to me, Mrs. Grummerly," exclaimed John indignantly, "and take a common-sense view of the matter, instead of abusing the good old Saxons. The squire's lady calls on me, suppose, and orders a piece of carving. Well, I'm to call on her about it to-morrow, she says, some time in the morning; but that may be any time before seven in the evening, as they dine late at the Hall. I may go up just at the wrong time for seeing her; but if she had said, 'Come up in the *forenoon*,' I should go up, of course, some time between nine and twelve o'clock."

"Very likely, Mr. Totts; but people aren't used now-a-days to your old-fashioned hours."

"True, ma'am, but I wish they were; it would be better for many of them. You remember how the proverb says,—

'Early to bed, and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.'

"I daresay the proverb says so, Mr. Totts, but it's none the truer for that. Why, look at John Gub-

bins: he's seldom in bed after four in the morning—beg pardon, four in the forenoon—and he's seldom out of it after sunset; and do you think that he's 'healthy, wealthy, and wise'? Not a bit of it. He's never well, to my certain knowledge; he hasn't a spare penny to bless himself with; and all the neighbours call him the biggest fool in the parish."

"Perhaps so, Mrs. Grummerly. He is an exception, I allow; but then he spends the best part of his earnings in drink. And say what you will about his being in bed by sunset, why, that can only be on those few nights when he is not turned out of the Hare and Hounds as the clock strikes eleven."

But we must return to the picture-frame and its contents.

"Look here, mother," exclaimed John Totts, holding up to view Sarah's workmanship; "did you ever see the like of this?"

"Well, John," replied his wife, "I've been a bit in the secret, and have contrived, as our Sarah wished to make it a surprise, that she should work at it when you were not by."

"And is it all her own?"

"Every stroke of it, John. Why, who else could do anything to come up to it, do you think?"

"Just so, mother; but what I want to know is, whether it is quite original, or partly a copy."

"Well, John, I must leave Sarah herself to answer as to that."

He looked at the child, whose face was all lighted up with a happy glow, as she marked his delighted gaze at the work which she had executed for him. "Is it *all* your own?" he asked.

"Yes, quite all, dear father; I have had no copy but nature to work from. I am so glad that you like it."

"Like it!" he exclaimed, drawing her fondly to him; "I am only afraid of liking it too much. Thank you, dearest child; I shall always prize it doubly—first, because it is entirely your own work, and then for its own merit. And now, where shall I put it? I should like to hang it up to be seen; but perhaps it may be better to hide it away, just for a while."

Sarah was quite satisfied; she had no wish to shine when her father thought it better that her work should be kept in the shade. However, circumstances were soon to bring herself and her picture out into the light.

Mr. William Milvert of Priorswood Hall, the squire, was a man who loved art in all its branches. Possessed of a cultivated taste, he had gathered round him at the Hall some noble paintings by artists ancient and modern, and loved to exhibit, to

any one who, like himself, could appreciate them, his portfolios of Rembrandt's etchings, and other prints by celebrated masters. It was also a hobby with him to search out and encourage artistic talent which had been hidden away from ordinary observation; and many a poor painter and sculptor had to thank him for generous and timely help which had drawn them out of obscurity and put them on the road to fame, or, at any rate, usefulness. Nothing pleased him better than to discover a free hand in the drawings of boys or girls among his tenants; and he was very urgent with the village school-master to cultivate such talent should he discover it in any one or more of his scholars. And now, when Sarah Jones had entered on her eleventh year, she brought home the news one evening that the squire had offered a prize of five guineas for the best work of art executed by any one under twenty-one years of age who should be living at the present time in the county in which the Hall was situated. There was to be no restriction as to the rank or occupation of the candidates. The competitors were to send in their works by the last day of September; and these works, including that which should gain the prize, were to remain the property of those who executed them.

John Totts looked very grave when he heard of

this offer, for at once his thoughts went to the birthday piece executed for him by Sarah, and which had as yet been shown to none of his visitors. Should he allow it to be sent in by Sarah as a competitor for the prize? Should it be sent, he felt sure that it would bear away the palm. Had he a right, then, to keep it back? The child was endowed with an extraordinary gift, and here was an opportunity of bringing that gift out into the light. Ought he to keep it covered up? Eminence in art might be used to God's glory as well as eminence in any other thing that might lawfully be cultivated. As all excellence must come from Him, surely, when any special gift had been bestowed, it should be made the most of. No light was ever given that it should be hidden under a bushel; and, so long as the candlestick on which it is set is not placed on the pedestal of vain-glory, every real light can be made so to shine as to increase the glow of innocent pleasure, and thus help to make this dark world a little less dark and a little less in contrast to the coming land and day of unclouded brightness. Thus did John Totts reason to himself and to his wife. So the end was that Sarah's picture was duly sent in to the squire's by the appointed day.

October was not a full week old when a notice appeared in the county papers inviting, in the

squire's name, any who might be disposed to come to the giving of the prize on the following Monday. The presentation was to be by the hand of Mrs. Milvert, in the great hall of the mansion, at 3 P.M. Great were the interest and expectation felt throughout the neighbourhood, especially by the competitors and their friends.

The day came at last, and a splendid day it was—one of those charming autumn days which are the perfection of English weather; not too hot, and not too cold, with a cloudless sun bathing the masses of variously tinted foliage in a flood of mellow light. John Totts, his wife, and Sarah were making their way towards the mansion, as the time of assembling drew near, when they were joined by Mrs. Grummerly, who had a nephew among the exhibitors.

"Good-day, John," said the old woman; "I wonder who'll get the prize. A work of art! well, that's a good deal in your line. What a pity you aren't young enough to exhibit; though, for my part, I don't see much use in enticing the young people, as the squire is doing, to waste their precious time in drawing and such like. Why, what good will it do them after all? Supposing they are able to paint a white lion or a green dragon for a public-house sign-board, that wouldn't get them a bread. Much better offer a prize to the boy who can make

the best bench, and to the girl who can make the best pudding ; there would be some sense in that."

" Ah, that's *your* view, Mrs. Grummerly," replied John ; " but, you see, it is not the squire's. Now, I am sure, no one does more for our good in every way than he does. But art is his hobby ; and why shouldn't it be ? Why should he not encourage it ? and why should not artistic talent be turned to good account ? "

" Well, I don't know, Mr. Totts ; but, at any rate, I hope my nephew Jim will get the prize. He has sent in a great big picture ; and I'm sure it has cost him more than two pounds in paint, canvas, and labour. It's a grand thing, it is for sure. It's a deal table, with two large cauliflowers and a bunch of carrots on it. He has made it wonderfully like. There's a couple of snails on the cauliflowers, ' as large as life and twice as natural,' as they say."

And now, when all had arrived at the house, a hearty welcome was given to all by the squire and Mrs. Milvert. The various works of art which had been sent in by the different exhibitors were arranged round the noble hall, and conspicuous among these was the painting by Mrs. Grummerly's nephew, dazzling the eye by its blaze of staring colours.

When three o'clock had struck, and the assembled

company were standing about in eager expectation, the squire advanced to the middle of the hall and said: "My good friends, I am happy to see so many of you here to-day. I have just one word of explanation to give before the presentation of the prize to the successful competitor. Having a great fondness myself for works of art, and believing that excellence in any and every lawful pursuit is power, I have been led to offer this prize; and I can truly say that I now rejoice that I made the offer, for it has brought out an amount of really creditable artwork far beyond what I could have expected. But to secure the prize being given entirely and solely according to merit, I have not trusted to my own judgment, but have submitted all the competing works to an old and valued friend of my own, who is in every way a first-rate judge of excellence in works of art, and who is with us this afternoon; I mean Mr. William Fellowes, according to whose award the prize will now be given. At the same time, I would just add thus much, by way of consoling and encouraging those who are not the winners to-day, that none need give up nor despair. No! let them persevere, and who knows what height they may not mount up to? England is full of the triumphs of patience and perseverance."

Mr. Fellowes now stood forward and said: "Ladies

and gentlemen, I have a pleasing, though in some respects painful, task to perform. I mean I have to gratify a few and to disappoint many. However, I have this consolation on the present occasion, —there has not been a moment's doubt or hesitation in my mind as to the successful candidate. Many creditable works of art have been sent in, as you have already heard from my excellent friend your squire; but there is one which most unmistakably far excels all the others. I will not keep you any longer in suspense. I pronounce the successful competitor to be Sarah Jones. I understand that she is only ten years of age, and that her work is strictly original in design, as well as entirely her own in execution. It is here." (Saying which, he held up to view Sarah's birthday present to her father.) "It is a marvellous work for so young a person," he added, "and reminds me of one, an artist of the same sex, though not a fellow-countrywoman, who excelled in cutting out with her scissors such things as have never been equalled, nor are ever likely to be. I am speaking now of Joanna Koerten Block, who was born at Amsterdam in 1650. All that the engraver could execute she accomplished with her scissors,—landscapes, sea-pieces, animals, and flowers. But the most surprising of her cuttings out were her portraits, which were perfect

resemblances. Peter the Great visited her; the Empress of Germany commissioned her to execute a trophy with the arms of the Emperor Leopold the First. In this elaborate work, all cut out with scissors, the imperial crowns are supported by eagles, and surrounded by garlands of flowers and other appropriate ornaments. For this she received four thousand florins,—equal at least to four hundred sovereigns now. She also cut out the portrait of the Emperor, which is, or was, in the imperial library at Vienna. Her works were faultless in taste, correct in design, clean and vigorous in execution. The lines, so difficult to divide, are always without confusion, and as clean as if made with a crow-quill or graver. Now mind, dear friends, and specially dear young people, I am not wishing to puff up Sarah Jones, by leading her to suppose that she will rival Joanna Koerten Block as an artist; I only desire to encourage her to perseverance, by showing her, and all of you, that women have attained to the highest excellence in art. But then let us remember, boys and girls, that we may all mount up higher and higher in any noble and useful pursuit which we may take in hand, whether we have more than average gifts or talents or no. Great heights, bear in mind, must be gained by little steps; and this is true not only in

the contest for an earthly prize, but also when we are aiming at that heavenly one which is offered to every one of us. I am sure I do sincerely hope and pray that you may all, like the apostle, press toward the mark for the heavenly prize; and if you do so with God's help, you will none of you be disappointed, for all will be winners.—And now, Sarah Jones, come forward and receive from the kind hand of Mrs. Milvert the prize which is fairly and deservedly yours.”

When he had concluded Sarah came forward. All eyes had, of course, been fixed upon her since she was first named as the successful competitor. And now there was a general murmur of applause as she stepped from her place towards Mrs. Milvert modestly but firmly. She was simply and neatly dressed, for neither John Totts nor his wife had ever approved of finery for her. But however plain her attire, no one could help being struck with her face and its expression. Mr. Fellowes was specially interested in her appearance. Could she really be the child of an ordinary working man? if not, whose child could she be? The blue eyes, the flaxen hair, the ruddy glow now mantling in her cheeks, told that she might be of the old Saxon stock; but there was a peculiar refinement in the shaping of her features, especially when they

were turned to an observer in profile, which seemed to show that there must be "gentle blood" in her veins. Mr. Fellowes had heard a little about her from the squire, when he had signified to him his award, but he was very anxious to know more.

And now all attention was directed to Mrs. Milvert, who, rising from her seat as Sarah approached her, produced a silken purse, and placed it in her hand, saying at the same time: "My dear child, I have very much pleasure in presenting you, in the name of my husband, with this prize. I can truly say that both Mr. Milvert and myself are quite of the same mind and judgment as Mr. Fellowes in the matter. I hope, Sarah, that this is only the first step to a much higher and more distinguished success; but at the same time I do trust that you will never forget what our kind friend has said to you about the heavenly prize, and that you will pray to be kept humble—yes, I think you will. This purse, which has the five guineas in it, was knit by myself. I daresay you will not like it the less for that."

Sarah Jones received her prize with a low courtesy. She tried to say something, but could only look her gratitude. Then the crowd began to disperse and make their way homewards.

Sarah kept very close to John Totts and his

wife, and was silent; for Mrs. Grummerly joined them almost immediately, and on reaching them exclaimed, "Well, some people, as the saying is, are born to good luck."

"If you mean that for a proverb, Mrs. Grummerly," said John, "I can cap it with a better, and that is, 'Diligence is the mother of good luck.'"

"Oh, nonsense," cried the other peevishly; "that's another of your lying proverbs—excuse me, it is the proverb that lies, I mean, and not you. Diligence, indeed, the mother of good luck! Why, my nephew Jim was up by daylight for weeks and weeks at his picture, and never wasted a moment; wasn't that diligence? But if he had painted a picture that would have reached from here to London, I daresay even that wouldn't have got him the prize."

"Most likely not, ma'am," replied the carver dryly; "but I am sure Mr. Fellowes gave the young people, and all of us indeed, some excellent advice, and I hope we shall follow it. We shall be gainers then, whether we carry off a prize or no."

In reply to this the old woman only raised her eyebrows and shoulders, and then turned homewards, much to the satisfaction of the happy little trio.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WORKHOUSE BOY.



NOT many months after Sarah Jones's success in gaining the art prize, John Totts received into his family a poor orphan lad from the workhouse, who was bound to him as apprentice, to learn the trade of carpenter and joiner. This boy was about fourteen years of age: his name was Robert Mason. He came with a very good character for steadiness and industry, and was therefore kindly welcomed by both John and his wife to his new home. But a more striking contrast to Sarah Jones could hardly have been found. His eyes were dull and down-cast; his hair rough and uneven like a clump of furze bushes on some exposed common; his mouth undecided, with its lips usually ajar, which gave him a rather silly look; his ears more extensive than graceful; while his manner of carrying himself towards others might naturally lead to the con-

viction that he was made to be snubbed, and that he *was* snubbed. Such was Robert Mason when he made his first entrance into the carver's household.

"They've sent me a knotty bit of stuff to carve and polish," remarked John to his wife at the close of the first day; "I doubt if I shall ever make much out of him."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that," replied Mrs. Totts. "He hasn't got our Sarah's headpiece, it's true; but if he is willing to learn, and we are willing to teach him, and to put up with his dulness and awkwardness at first, I believe he'll turn out better than he looks, after a bit. Why, remember, John, that queer, tough old log, which sailor Ben brought you from foreign parts. Ah! you broke or blunted a score of tools on it at first, and were in two-thirds of a mind to throw it away or burn it. But what a lovely pair of candlesticks you made out of it after all, and what a perfect polish they took!"

"Very true, missus," rejoined John thoughtfully. "Yes; you are right, and I am wrong. Trust a woman's judgment in such matters, specially when the heart's got much to do with them. Well, it's not my way, as you know, to do things by halves, so we will do our duty by poor Robert with all our

might, and I daresay he won't disgrace us in the end."

And so both the carver and his wife took the boy in hand with the determination to see what could be made of him. Robert Mason, on his part, thoroughly appreciated the way in which his new friends dealt with him. While he was in the workhouse he was constantly being twitted with his stupidity. It was always taken as a matter of course, so that when a job was given him to do he was told out plainly that he would be sure to do it badly; and the natural result of such treatment was that he never cared to take pains, as he felt sure that blame would be his portion, let him do his very best. John Totts, however, proceeded exactly on the opposite plan, after the first day of the boy's stay with him. The morning after Robert Mason's arrival he took the lad into his workshop, and gave him a deal board to saw into narrow lengths. The apprentice went to work very deliberately, but never stopped; so his master, thinking that all was right, went about other work of his own. On coming to a pause, he just turned round to glance at the boy's progress, and saw that the plank on which he was trying his skill was sprinkled largely with blood from an ugly gash made in Robert's left hand by the saw; while the board

was being divided into irregular slices, which would prove utterly useless for any symmetrical work.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the dismayed carver, "what-ever are you up to, my lad? why, you've spoiled your own fingers as well as my wood. Did you never handle a saw before? Surely the boy has lost his senses."

"Never had none," said Robert gloomily.

"Why, what do you mean by that?" cried his master, with a rather angry look, for he thought that the boy was either sulking or shirking. "Do you mean to say, Robert, that you've got no senses?"

"That's what they've been always telling me at the workhouse," replied the other; "they call me a fool twenty times in a day, so I suppose it must be true."

"They had no business to do that," said John Totts in a kindly tone; "but anyhow, my lad, if what they said of you was true, you're not obliged to remain a fool all your days—you'll never earn your bread that way."

"I don't know," said the boy, his eyes filling with tears. "They tell me it's what I'm born to; some tell me I shall never be fit for anything but to carry hog-wash to the pigs."

"More shame to them, then," said the carver indignantly. "Come here, Robert. Be you sure

that God made you for something a deal better than that. You may mount up to a good height yet, though it may be by little steps."

"I don't know, master; I'm afraid not," said the boy, shaking his head, and dashing away a tear with his bleeding hand.

"Here—just give us your hand," cried the carver; and catching up a piece of rag which lay near, he bound it round the lad's wounded fingers, and then went on: "Did you ever see a high church tower, Robert?"

"Yes, master," replied the boy, opening his eyes wide with amazement at the suddenness and strangeness of the question.

"Well, did you ever see any people standing on the top of the tower?"

"Yes, master."

"When?"

"On the Queen's birthday, master."

"What were they doing there?"

"Putting up a flag, master."

"Did you see them go up?"

"Yes, master."

"Did they take a run, and leap up to the top of the tower at one jump?"

"Nay, master," said Robert, looking uneasy and distressed; "you must be making fun of me. I

may be a fool, but I'm not such a big fool as to say or believe that."

"All right, my boy," cried the other; "I'm not making fun of you, and I don't believe that you're a fool. But tell me now, if they didn't jump up to the top, how did they get up there?"

"Why, master, they *couldn't* jump up; the tower is more than a hundred feet high."

"And yet you say they were up there on the top, and you saw them get up; how was that?"

"Oh, easy enough, master; there's a flight of stone steps that keeps winding round and round. There are many hundreds of those steps before you can reach the top."

"But you *can* get to the top, if you go step by step; eh, Robert?"

"To be sure, master."

"And you can't get to the top unless you go step by step, and every step."

"Yes, master; that's true."

"Well, Robert, can't you see now what I'm driving at?"

"Not exactly, master."

"Well, Robert, I'll make it plain to you, I think; —but are you willing to learn?"

"Yes, master, if you can have the patience to teach me."

"Just so, Robert; there must be two of us willing, and there must be patience and perseverance too. Now, I am quite willing to teach; and if you are as willing to learn, you'll soon find that you were made for something far better than to be a fool all your days. What you have got to do is to begin at the bottom of the tower, and to go up one step at a time, and you'll get to a good height in time, take my word for it. So don't be discouraged. Do you think that you understand me now?"

"Yes, master," replied Robert, but in a voice husky and half-choked with emotion.

"Then you'll try to learn?" said the carver.

"Yes, master, by God's help, so I will." Here the poor boy fairly broke down; then, drawing nearer to his master, he took the carpenter's rough hand between his own and kissed it.

John Totts was deeply moved; he began to see into that poor, desolate heart. "There, there, Robert," he cried, his own voice rendered unsteady by his emotion, at the same time placing his disengaged hand kindly on the other's shoulder—"we shall make a man of you yet, and I shall live to see you at the top of the tower."

Robert made no immediate reply, but sitting down on a stool that stood near, gave vent to such an outburst of weeping as his former employers

and companions would have thought him utterly incapable of. At last he looked up through his tears and sobbed out, "O master, you're too kind to me: no one ever spoke like that to me before. I'll do my best, that I will; only you must bear with me—but I really will take pains."

"I'm sure you will, Robert," said John Totts, much moved. "There, my boy, let us look at your hand. Ah! the bleeding has stopped, I see. Now, come and stand here, and just watch me while I saw up this plank, and then dress it; you know I'd a deal to learn before I could handle my tools as I am able to do now. There, just lay hold of that end of the plank and steady it. You will turn out some work, before long, that will do us both credit."

The poor boy's only answer was such a smile as had, perhaps, never before lighted up that ordinarily inexpressive face; and then most attentively did he give heed to his master's instructions till the morning task was done.

From that day forward John Totts's mind was made up how he would treat his apprentice. Instead of beginning a day's work by taking it for granted that Robert was going to do badly, and prove himself nothing but a fool, he would enter the workshop with a smile, and say, "Now, Robert,

we are going to do our best, each of us, to-day. Let us see. I've a job here that will just suit you. Take pains, there's a good lad, and you'll learn in time to turn out your work as well as I can do it myself." And Robert did take pains; every stroke of his work had love in it. He was slow and plodding, and sometimes vexed his master a bit by his want of briskness; but when John Totts would come out now and then with a hasty expression of impatience, he was always sorry for it, and would soften it off by some encouraging proverb; as thus: "Ah, Robert!—well, never mind; it's slow and steady that wins the race: the tortoise will beat the hare in the long run."

So, cheered by his master's forbearance and encouragement—for John Totts had always a word of praise for every bit of the apprentice's work which had been done with more than ordinary care—the poor desolate lad found a happy home in the carver's dwelling. And no wonder; for Mrs. Totts was of the same mind as her husband, and did everything she could to encourage Robert to diligence and perseverance. And truly she had her reward, for never had any one a more loving helper than she found in the grateful workhouse boy. If water was to be fetched, or an errand done, or a heavy weight needed lifting, or a dirty job under-

taken, Robert was always ready to be the doer, and to do the work thoroughly.

But besides this, there was an element in the boy's happiness which made that happiness as perfect as it could be in a world marred by sin. This element was the kind notice he received from Sarah Jones. From the very first he was an object of the profoundest pity to the child. She felt instinctively how complete was the difference of character and disposition between him and herself. Something within her bade her, at first, despise him—he was so unlike what she would look for as good or noble in a young person of the other sex. But she had come upon this sentiment of the poet Wordsworth—

“ He that can feel contempt for any living thing,
Hath faculties which he has never used.”

She could not, at her early age, fathom the full meaning of these words ; but she had grasped enough of their meaning to know that she could not innocently despise any one, however short he might come of her standard of excellence, whether in person or in mind. So she set herself to find out what was good in poor Robert ; and soon discovered, in his patience, diligence, and perseverance in the work set him by his master, and in his unostentatious labours of love for her mother, abundance to admire.

And as she was herself a simple and humble follower of "the good Shepherd," she could not but desire to help Robert to love and follow Him too. He soon perceived this; and as he marked the quiet and consistent piety of that gentle child—when he saw how different she was from himself, so full of strange and high imaginings, and yet all the time so humble and unselfish—he felt that to be near her, to be under the daily influence which radiated from her, to hear her voice and feel her smile—he felt that all this made his present earthly home one which he would not change for the noblest and wealthiest dwelling that earth possessed. Poor Robert! happy Robert!

CHAPTER VII.

JEALOUSY.



IF there was peace in the carver's dwelling, there was not a like peace at the Hall; for there was one there who envied and at the same time pretended to despise Sarah Jones. This was Clara Milvert, the squire's daughter. When the offer of an art prize had been made by her father, it became her great ambition to be herself the successful competitor. She was at that time thirteen years of age, and very forward in all the studies she had entered on. Her only brother, who was many years older than Clara, was now abroad with his regiment. She had only two sisters, who were some years her juniors; so that, as being the eldest daughter, she was made much of at home both by her parents and herself. No pains had been spared to make her accomplished, and, having naturally good abilities, she soon made it apparent to all about her that

she wished and expected to shine in the world, or, at any rate, in her own world. Inheriting from both parents finely-formed features, and having shot up already almost to a woman's height, she carried herself, at the age of thirteen, like one who looked for that general homage which is seldom paid except to fully-matured and extraordinary beauty.

Music and drawing she excelled in ; she also put together numerous respectable rhymes, upon which some of her flatterers bestowed the name of "poetry;" in consequence of which estimate she was led to publish a small volume of these effusions, with the title, "Who's Poems?" A critique, however, beginning, "Who's Poems?—*nobody's* poems—*anybody's* verses," extinguished her efforts at publicity in this direction, at any rate for a time. Nevertheless, being very desirous of gaining public distinction, she had set her heart on winning the art prize offered by her father. She was, of course, aware that it would not have done for her to send in a work in her own name, as it would have put the squire in a very awkward position in the estimation of the public, had he awarded the prize knowingly to his own child. And yet, why should not she try as well as any one else? And what a nice thing it would be should she take her father by surprise as the successful competitor! She was

fully assured of the squire's strict impartiality, and that each work exhibited would be estimated by him simply and solely according to its intrinsic worth. She had also heard her father say, soon after he had made his offer public, that he should not trust to his own judgment in the award, but should get some competent friend to decide for him. Why, then, might she not herself bear away the palm, if she only sent in her piece under a feigned name? She pictured to herself how charming this would be.

A water-colour drawing from nature—this was what she decided to send in. Well, she conjures up a fascinating picture of her own success. The various efforts in art have all been inspected, and the choice of the judge has fallen on a water-colour drawing by Louisa Furnival. The day of the prize-giving has come. Louisa Furnival has gained the prize. "But who and where is Louisa Furnival?" asks the squire. Then before the assembled company she herself steps forward and tells how she has been quietly working at the drawing when her parents were not at hand to see; and now, quite unknown to them, indeed without a suspicion on their part, she has been the successful one. What a happy moment for her! and what a proud moment for them! For all must see that there has

been no leaning to her because she is the squire's child. The reward has been assigned to her under an assumed name simply because she has fairly earned it. Such was Clara Milvert's day-dream. So she worked at her drawing with all diligence and secrecy, and got a friend of hers, her only confidante in the matter, to direct the parcel and send it to the Hall, after having signed the name "Louisa Furnival" in the corner; for she was afraid that her own handwriting might betray her.

Thus far all went on successfully with her project. No one even suspected her of having had anything to do with the execution or sending in of the drawing. So she was very hopeful, nay, almost confident of success: for she had taken great pains, and flattered herself that she had quite outdone any previous efforts of her own; and as her drawing-master had been wont to give her performances under his teaching a large measure of praise, she felt pretty sure on this occasion that there was no one in the neighbourhood, whether gentle or simple, who could exhibit any original that would bear a favourable comparison with her own performance as a work of art. And, indeed, her drawing had considerable merit, and had been much admired both by Mr. Fellowes and the squire; so much so, that some curiosity was expressed by them both to

know who this Louisa Furnival might be. Nevertheless, the award of the highest merit was not adjudged to this drawing; and thus, on the all-important day, Clara Milvert had the mortification of finding herself outdone and thrown into deep shadow by a little girl of ten, the carpenter's adopted daughter.

Nothing could exceed Clara's annoyance and vexation; but, at any rate, no one but herself should know that she had been an exhibiter and had failed. So, while the unsuccessful competitors were receiving back their trial-pieces, accompanied by a kind word or two from the squire and his lady, she contrived to get possession of her own drawing, and to convey it away to her own room unobserved. Then, having torn it out of its frame, and having crumpled it up together, she watched her opportunity and thrust it into the kitchen fire, standing by until it was entirely consumed.

But a worse fire abode in her own heart—a fire continually fed by a fuel which was always burning, but never burned up. This was the fire of *jealousy*. To think that *she* had been beaten by that little chit of a Sarah Jones! Well; and was it really a fair beating after all? She had overheard Mrs. Grummerly say to a neighbour after the prize had been given, while the company was dis-

persing, "Mark my words, Mrs. Price,—that child never did that there picture all of herself. You may be sure that John Totts did the best of it all. But folks like him and his don't do things like ordinary people." Did Clara Milvert believe this? Hardly. And yet it might be so. At any rate, the bare possibility was sufficient to aggravate her feelings of jealousy and dislike towards her successful rival. And yet she could not venture to say a word to her father or mother on the subject; they would think it so mean of her to hint at such a thing. But why should she not ease her feelings by paying a visit to Mrs. Grummerly, and having a talk with her alone about it? Accordingly, a day or two after the prize-giving, she made her way to the old woman's cottage, taking with her some fruit in a little basket.

"I hope you are well, Mrs. Grummerly," she said cheerily on entering. "I've come to pay you a short visit, and my mother said I might as well take you a few grapes."

"Sit down, miss; pray sit down," cried the old woman, greatly delighted. "I'm sure you're heartily welcome; and I feel it most kind of her ladyship, your mamma, to think of sending these beautiful grapes to a poor lone woman like me. It puts me in mind of the days when I used to live with the

baronet and his lady. Ah! they were kind indeed; and so is your dear mother too. Well, if my nephew Jim didn't get a prize, I'm sure I've got one now." And she held up the rich bunch of grapes admiringly.

"Now, that is just what I should like to have a little talk with you about, Mrs. Grummerly," said Clara, seating herself on the room's best chair, which the old woman had carefully dusted for her.

"About what, my dear young lady?"

"Oh, about the prize-giving. I'm not quite satisfied about it; only you must not tell any one that I have said so."

"No, miss, of course not; but you are just like me there. To think of Sarah Jones getting the prize! Why, there wasn't a hundredth part of the time and trouble spent on her picture as there was on my poor Jim's, and on many another's besides."

"Perhaps not, Mrs. Grummerly. But I was not thinking so much about that. It is not the biggest thing, nor the thing that has cost the most time and trouble that is necessarily the best; and this is specially the case with works of art."

"Praps so, miss," replied the other rather gloomily. "I'm not, of course, a fair judge in such matters; but I should have thought that any one as had eyes in his head would have thought more of our Jim's

picture, so bright and gay as it looked, than of that queer-looking thing cut out of letter-paper all alike—sheep, shepherd, grass, and hills—without a bit of colour on any of them, to make them look natural-like.”

“Still, Mrs. Grummerly,” said her young visitor thoughtfully, “we may be quite sure that Mr. Fellowes could have no wish to act unfairly or to favour any one; and he is a great judge. But what troubles me is this—I should like to feel quite sure that Sarah Jones did that picture all herself, and quite out of her own head, as they say she did.”

“Say, indeed!” exclaimed the old woman scornfully; “let them say what they like, that child never did all that without any help. Depend upon it, miss, it was just simply a got-up thing. John Totts got it out of one of his old books or curiosity-drawers, or copied it for her on to the paper; and then she cut it out, for she’s nimble enough with her fingers, no doubt. And then they call it all her own doing. Now that wasn’t fair; was it, Miss Clara?”

“Certainly not, Mrs. Grummerly, if what you suggest was really the case. But then every one thinks Sarah such a good and pious girl; and if she really is so, she never would have joined in acting a lie in that way.”

"As for goodness and piety," replied the other sneeringly, "you may depend upon it they won't any of them let that stand in the way of their mounting up a little higher in the eyes of the world. John Totts and his wife have always been for pushing up that child; and as for Robert Mason, the boy almost worships her. So you may be sure they wouldn't be over-scrupulous, any of them, as to a little underhand work, if only they could make Sarah into something above the common."

"I am inclined to think you may be right," said Clara thoughtfully.

"You may depend upon that," said the other confidently; "and a great pity it is too," she added. "They are wanting to make a fine lady and a genius out of Sarah; but it won't do. It's of no use for one as has not been a lady born and bred setting up for one; it's sure to come out sooner or later—even simple folks know the difference. But John Totts has always got some outlandish old proverb to back up his opinions and ways; just as though people who live in these times hadn't outgrown those clumsy and old-world habits."

Clara made no reply to this, but soon took her leave, having first enjoined silence on the old woman about their having had this talk together. The next morning she took an opportunity of telling her

father what Mrs. Grummerly had said. At this the squire was both grieved and puzzled. He could hardly believe the carver or any member of his family capable of acting so deceitfully, and yet he felt it to be his duty to have a word with John himself on the subject. So one morning, or forenoon as John preferred to call it, he joined the carver in his workshop when he was alone.

"Good-morning, John Totts."

"Good-morning, squire."

"Have you anything special on hand just now, Mr. Totts?"

"Nothing out of the common way, sir. However, if you like looking at really good work, here is a picture-frame designed and carved by our Sarah, which beats me hollow. Just look there, sir! Examine that cluster of grapes, and that bird with half-opened wings. You would find it hard to match that bit of carving all the country round."

"It is indeed a marvellous piece of work," said Mr. Milvert; "and really it is difficult to believe that so young a person could have executed it."

"It is all her own for all that," cried the carver briskly.

"Ah yes, I daresay," rejoined the squire. "I suppose you gave her the design, and then she worked it out, leaving the finishing touches to yourself."

"Nothing of the sort, squire ; it is as completely her own, design and all, as her art prize-piece was."

"Well, Mr. Totts, as you say it, no doubt it is so. But you know, I daresay, that many people have given you credit for a share in that beautiful piece of work, which won the prize, and deservedly won it too. Nay, my friend," he continued, observing a heavy cloud gathering on the other's features, "don't be put out or angry ; I mean no disrespect to yourself or to Sarah Jones. If it was only half her own she deserved the prize. But some seem to think that no hand but your own could have executed some parts of the work."

"And you yourself believe this, sir ?" asked the carver in a hoarse whisper.

"Nay," replied Mr. Milvert soothingly, "I would not say so ; only, of course, it *is* hard to believe so young a girl as Sarah capable of accomplishing such a work of art entirely without assistance."

John Totts made no reply for a minute, while the cloud on his brow grew blacker and heavier. Then he strode out of his workshop, with the words, "I shall be back directly, sir." The squire was both puzzled and grieved at the effect produced by his own words ; but he had not much opportunity for reflection, for in a very few minutes John Totts was back again, and, facing the squire, stretched out his

right hand to him, and, unclasping the fingers, disclosed the five guineas which had formed the art prize.

"Squire Milvert," said John slowly and with much emotion, "we are plain working people, but not so poor as to have need to have recourse to dishonesty to help ourselves on a bit. So, if down in the depths of your heart you believe, or have even merely a misgiving, that Sarah had any assistance whatever from me in doing that piece to which the prize was awarded, I desire that you will take back the money. We should scorn to keep it; and, thank the Lord, we can do without it."

Mr. Milvert was greatly pained at John Totts's speech and his offer to return the gold. He scarcely knew what to say. However, he motioned away the carver's hand, and then exclaimed: "I am quite satisfied, Mr. Totts; I would not take back the money for the world. I do not and cannot doubt you. The work was no doubt *bona fide* entirely Sarah's own. What a pity it is that there should be people who take a pleasure in putting about idle reports and suspicions!"

"A great pity, squire; but I think I know the author of this cruel slander. I am persuaded that it can be none other than Mrs. Grummerly, who never can look on our Sarah without a frown or a

sneer. She was vexed because her nephew Jim did not get the prize. She is one of those who measure merit by the yard. If Jim had covered a rood of canvas with his paints, nothing could have persuaded her that his mere expenditure of labour, time, and oil-colour ought not to have secured the prize for him, quite without any consideration of the execution of the work; and so she is jealous because our Sarah's small performance was adjudged the one displaying the highest excellence."

"Just so, John Totts; I see it all now," cried the squire. "As you say, quantity and not quality is what she and others like her would judge by. There, John, accept my sincere regrets that I harboured for a moment any suspicion against yourself or Sarah—it is completely gone now, for I am sure that you are both as honest as the day."

Having thus said, he held out his hand to the carver, who took it, but not very cordially. "You see, squire," he said, "there are many here who don't like me and my ways, because I have a fancy to do things in my own fashion and not in theirs. I daresay you will have heard many hard things said against my bringing up of our Sarah; but, after all, as the homely proverb says, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating.'"


"Certainly, John Totts; and in this case the

cooking has been undoubtedly first-rate, though I must own to having had at times my misgivings on the subject."

"I daresay you have, sir," replied the carver. "I know that my views of education are very different from those of most people; but then, I don't feel myself accountable for my views to 'most people,' but just to my God and my Bible. You see, sir, I am one of those, and always shall be, who take the word of God literally, wherever it is possible to do so. Therefore, I and my wife have dealt with the child just as the Bible bids us do. We didn't 'spare the rod' when it was needed—as it always will be at first; but we've put it into the fire long ago, for a word from us, or an appeal to the holy Book, always proves sufficient now."

"And do you think the child is happy, Mr. Totts, without companions of her own age, and with such peculiar tastes?"

"Perfectly happy, squire, I believe. She is one who is never at a loss for occupation or amusement. She lives in a world of her own; and where others would seek company, it is her delight to take solitary rambles, or to hold quiet communings with imaginary beings, which are not, it may be, altogether imaginary. But her highest pleasure is to take her little New Testament and drink in its holy



teachings, and to get deeper insight into the love of her Saviour. And yet, sir, for all this, I am free to confess that it might be of benefit to Sarah to come a little more out of herself and her own ways, and to mix a little with such companions of her own age and sex as might be of real use to her. I am quite aware that it is no kindness to a child to let her grow into an oddity, and peculiar; still, we got her in a peculiar way, and we must go on with her bringing-up just one step at a time, as the Lord points out her way and sees to be best for her and for us."

The squire was silent for a while. It occurred to him very forcibly that to have Sarah up at the Hall now and then, to spend some hours with his own Clara, might prove of real benefit to both, Sarah's mind and acquirements more than making up for the difference in rank and culture. But then he feared that Clara's own heart was, for the present at any rate, fast closed against her humbler neighbour. So, keeping down the thoughts which were rising in his mind on the subject, he parted from the carver with a hearty expression of confidence and good-will, and returned home wondering much in himself what Sarah Jones would turn out at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMBITION.



ONE took a deeper interest in Sarah Jones, or rejoiced more in hearing and repeating her praises, than Robert Mason the apprentice. Her influence over him was unbounded. If he could only please her, he was satisfied; while, on the other hand, the slightest expression of displeasure or dissatisfaction on her part at anything he had done or said would make him miserable for hours. When Robert had reached the age of sixteen (which answered to twelve years of age in Sarah), he had come to cherish one great ambition, which was just to please her in all things. Not that he did not also wish to please his master and mistress, for he was sincerely attached to both of them, and had now become a most valuable helper to John Totts, who could depend upon him to do his best at all times, whether the master's eye was on him or no; but to please Sarah was at

all times his foremost aim. To that end, he had paid some considerable attention to the improvement of his personal appearance ; so that those who saw him now at church on Sundays could scarcely believe him to be the same rough, scrubby boy who had entered the carver's family two years before. The well-combed and well-oiled hair, so different from its old door-mat appearance ; the satin necktie so carefully arranged ; the neatly-fitting gloves ; and the well-shaped and brilliantly-polished boots, made a marvellous transformation in him on the Sundays. Nor was this change confined to those days : he had evidently studied improvement for workdays as well, which was specially observable in his now frequent use of soap and water ; as could be seen at meal-times, when the marks on his countenance could no longer be traced, as they could formerly, by black meanderings like the lines on a railway-map ; and when mourning borders had disappeared from his finger nails. He had also procured an elegant breast-pin, which sparkled gaily when the sun lighted on it.

John Totts and his wife had both noticed this change in the apprentice with satisfaction, but had not yet perceived that a desire to make a better appearance in the eyes of Sarah was the motive which had led to this transformation. Mrs. Grummerly,

however, had her suspicions on the subject. One day, as she was making her way slowly home from church, she was passed by Robert Mason, who was running back to fetch Sarah's hymn-book, which she had accidentally left in the pew. As he was overtaking her on his return, the old woman bade him stop and give her his company for a few minutes, till they came to the lane which led down to her cottage. He did not quite like to refuse, as there was no absolute hurry for his return, seeing that the services for the day were now over ; but he would much rather have gone on, as he had no liking for Mrs. Grummerly. He checked his pace, however, and kept by her side, comforting himself with the reflection that it would not be many minutes before a separation must take place.

"So, Robert," the old woman began, "you're becoming quite a fine gentleman, to be sure. Well, the world is full of strange things, so one mustn't be surprised."

Robert made no reply, but only quickened his pace a little.

"Oh ! you mustn't be angry with me, my boy," she cried, noticing his impatience ; "I mean you no harm ; indeed, if you'll only listen to the advice of an old woman who has seen a good deal of the

world in her day, and knows a thing or two, it may be of real service to you."

Still the other said nothing in return.

"Ah! I see how it is," continued Mrs. Grummerly; "it's all for Sarah Jones; I can tell that, for I haven't got eyes and brains in my head for nothing. Yes, it would be very nice, I don't doubt, to set up in business for yourself a few years hence, with Sarah to share the home with you."

"If you please, ma'am," said the lad, in a tone of deep annoyance, "you've no right to say anything of the sort. I'm sure I haven't given you any cause to say so."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense, Robert! Where's the use of pretending that I am wrong? and where's the harm of an honest, hard-working lad like yourself having such a thing in view? Only, just listen to me and heed what I say, when I advise you to look before you leap. Be sure of this, both Mr. Totts and Mrs. Totts mean to aim higher for Sarah. They've been making a fine lady of her already, as far as that's possible; and in some things she seems to take to it naturally. But be sure of this, Robert—and I only say it out of real kindness to you—you'll never make the fine gentleman that will suit her, though you may polish yourself up ever so much. There, Robert, we've got to part now;—

thank you for your company, and don't forget my advice."

Robert's only reply was an awkward sort of bow; but as he made his way homewards, the old woman's words rankled in his thoughts. Was she right in her suspicion? Well, certainly, not far wrong. Without doubt, his one great aim and ambition was to become more and more acceptable in the eyes of Sarah Jones; but as for anything beyond that, it had not yet fairly taken shape in his mind. But now Mrs. Grummerly's words had, as it were, stereoscoped his dim visions and hopes into something substantial-looking. And was it really so hopeless a prospect after all? Could he never become such an one as could win the heart of Sarah Jones? Perhaps not. But yet, why should he not still do his best to please her? It delighted him whenever he was able to do so; and this was, at any rate, present happiness, whatever might be in store for him in the future. And why should he trouble himself by dwelling on Mrs. Grummerly's opinion and advice? No, come what might, why should he not try to win some distinction by little steps? for often had his master impressed upon him that it was perseverance and application that outdid genius in the long run. Yes, it would be a proud day for him if he should be able by dint of plodding and patience

to gain some sort of prize, and show it first to his kind master, and then to Sarah. It would show that the destitute workhouse boy was not the fool he used to be taken for by many; and perhaps might win for him a feeling something akin to regard in Sarah's heart.

Poor Robert! the bare thought of such a thing being possible lighted up his dull features with such a glow from time to time as made the carver and his wife wonder what had come to the boy when they marked it. As for Sarah Jones, she was as yet too much of a child to trouble herself with speculations on the nature of Robert Mason's feelings towards her. And yet she could not help noticing how he sought her society, especially to be alone with her. It was often agreeable to her to have him for a companion, and to read aloud to him some favourite passage, as she had little choice of auditors. His rapt attention during such readings gratified her; and yet she could not help feeling that he could not really appreciate much that she read to him, and that what in truth charmed him was just to listen to her voice. And there was also at times a tenderness in his voice and manner towards herself, when they were alone together, which puzzled and distressed her. For the conviction was strong in her that there was a region of

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thought and imagination, into which her spirit loved to soar, where his spirit could not meet hers. Companions and friends they might always be, but nothing closer. Yes, child as she was, she was certain of this. She was sorry for Robert: she respected and even admired him in many things; but as her mind developed, and imagination peopled her own special world with things incomprehensible to ordinary minds, she held intercourse with him less and less, and rather endured occasional close companionship with him in kindness and pity than encouraged it from any pleasure it gave to herself. And he began to feel this; so that, when two more years had gone by, he had become sadly aware that, while his own heart warmed towards her more and more, hers was shrinking back more and more from him. Would it ever be otherwise? He feared not. Nevertheless, he would watch and bide his time, and circumstances would show him what he must finally expect.

Things were in this position when Sarah's fourteenth birthday came round. It was glorious midsummer weather; the fields all about were redolent with the fragrance of the new-mown hay, and all nature was rejoicing in floods of sunshine. Sarah had gone in the afternoon to the Hall with a message from John Totts, and was expected home by

tea-time. Everywhere the haymakers were busy, and all available hands were being employed in gathering in the well-ripened crops. As Sarah passed along a foot-path which skirted a large field of the squire's, and drew near to the Hall, she noticed Jim, Mrs. Grummerly's nephew, among the haymakers, and she soon saw that she was observed by him. She passed sufficiently near him to mark a very malicious grin on his face as it was turned towards herself; and very thankful she felt when she had passed well out of his reach. Having executed her errand, she was again making her way through the same field on her homeward walk, when, to her surprise, annoyance, and almost dismay, she noticed that Jim had seen her, and, having stuck his fork in the ground, was making his way rapidly up to her. Not liking this, she quickened her step, but in vain; for the boy redoubled his pace, and soon got ahead of her. Then he turned abruptly round, so that with difficulty she avoided running up against him.

"Why in such a hurry, Miss Sarah?" cried Jim; "can't you spare time for a word or two of civil talk? or have the arts and sciences taken up so much of your attention that you feel it beneath you to give any heed to a poor boy like me?"

"I want to get home," cried Sarah in a frightened

voice; "and I wish, James, you would not hinder me."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed the other. "Some folks are fine and grand indeed! What'll be next? I'm sure nobody knows. Now just come along with me, and repeat over to us commonplace working people one of those beautiful poems about angels, or spirits, or some of those strange things which no one except yourself ever dreams of. We are just going, we haymakers, to have a draught of beer and a mouthful of bread and cheese while we are waiting for the next waggon, and it would do us all good to listen to some of your strange pieces; unless you despise us, and think us beneath your notice."

"Oh, it isn't that," said poor Sarah nervously; "I hope I don't despise anybody: but—"

"Oh, come along, then," cried her tormentor. "You see we are all looking for something out of the common from one who can talk as you can." So saying, he laid hold of her arm and began to draw her towards a group of men and women who were now coming up, and were wondering what was happening.

The poor girl trembled violently, and tried to disengage her arm, but without success. Jim kept his hold, and motioned with his other hand to his

fellow-labourers to come forward. "Come on," he cried, in a taunting tone; "we are going to hear a poem from our great genius; we shan't get such a treat every day. Come, sit down and listen, all good people; a poetical recital, or a lecture on carving, cutting, and snipping, from the renowned Miss Sarah Jones of world-wide fame." As he said these words he had turned round to face the haymakers, who were collecting from the direction of the Hall, and had not noticed the rapid approach of a newcomer from the opposite quarter. But now, as he heard the sound of quick footsteps, he paused, and glanced behind him, still keeping his hold tight on the arm of poor Sarah, who was ready to sink to the ground with distress and fear.

"O Robert, Robert, help me!" she cried. In a moment Robert Mason was beside her.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed; "who dares ill-treat Sarah Jones?"

"Oh, no ill-treatment at all, Mister Mason," replied Jim scornfully. "I've only been trying to persuade Miss Jones here to give us the pleasure of a recitation while we rest a bit from our work." He did not, however, relax his grasp from Sarah's arm. Robert noticed this, and also her look of pain and trouble.

"Let her go this instant!" he shouted, in a voice

which might have been heard at the other end of the field.

"I shall do nothing of the sort at *your* bidding," cried Jim haughtily.

A moment after he found his hand plucked violently from Sarah's arm, and, before he could utter another word, he was reeling and staggering about some dozen yards from the spot where he had just been standing, having been hurled away from it by the vigorous arm of Sarah's rescuer, whose strength was double his own. Down he went at last to the ground, head foremost, and lay there as though stunned for a few seconds. Then he sprang up and rushed back, but soon turned away as he marked the determined look of Robert Mason, who had now linked Sarah's arm in his own and was leading her homewards.

The haymakers looked on highly amused, without offering any interference, while Robert, without loosing Sarah's arm, turned towards the crestfallen, slinking Jim, and said: "Look here, my friend: it's a good thing for you that my hands are not at liberty; but I can tell you that you won't get off so easy if you attempt to meddle with Sarah Jones again." No reply was made to this by the other; so Robert and his companion went their way without molestation, and for a while in silence. At

last, when they were nearing John Totts's dwelling, Sarah stopped short in the walk and drew her arm free. Oh, what a happiness it had been to Robert to feel that arm clinging to his; to experience its tremblings; and to be sensible of Sarah's dependence for the time on him! But this was not to last. As the chimney of her home came in view, having disengaged herself from her rescuer, she turned to him, and said, while her eyes filled with tears,—

“O Robert! how can I ever thank you enough for coming to my help, and just at the very right time?”

“I don't need any thanks, Sarah,” was his reply, —“at least not now,” he added slowly, at the same time looking her earnestly and almost beseechingly in the face. “Perhaps,” he added, in a trembling whisper, “I may one day get the only thanks I shall ever care for; but the happiness of helping you is of itself more than thanks enough.”

She looked very anxiously at him. Did she understand him? Not fully, but partly. “But how was it,” she asked, “that you happened to be coming up just then?”

“I can't exactly tell,” was his reply. “I only know that I had a secret misgiving that you might meet with some difficulty on your way home; so I thought that I would come out to meet you; and it was well that I did so.”

"Well indeed, Robert! Yes, I need ask no more; it is plain to me now that the Lord sent you. Oh, what a happiness it is to be able to trace all our mercies and helps to His loving and watchful care! It makes every day and hour of our lives full of a heavenly meaning."

"No doubt, Sarah; I can see how it is indeed so in your own case. I only wish I could view things more in this light myself."

"And why should you not, Robert? Remember that the promises and privileges of the gospel belong to *every* believer in the gracious and loving Saviour."

"I will try and remember it now," he said seriously.

"Ay, do, Robert," she cried; "and trust the Lord brightly, and not sadly. Well, thank you again, with all my heart, for your aid. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed,' as my dear father would remind us; and you have been truly to me the friend in need."

Soon after these words were uttered they reached home. And now, would this rescue by Robert draw Sarah's heart nearer to his? Would regard grow into a tenderer feeling? Gladly would he have hoped it; but the conviction became stronger in him every day that this was not to be, and could not be. Indeed, while Sarah was ever ready to

show her gratitude for Robert's most timely help, by taking every opportunity to do him little acts of kindness such as lay in her power and province, she was, at the same time, most careful to make him feel that she did not desire any closer intimacy between them than formerly. Nay, more: fearing, it would seem, lest he should look to be admitted to more intimate fellowship with her as a return for having come to her help in her hour of distress, she rather avoided being alone with him, so that he had now considerably less of her company to himself than in earlier days. Sadly did Robert arrive at a settled conviction entirely subversive of his most deeply cherished hopes. She, on her part, was sorry to see him sad; nevertheless, she felt that she could not alter her behaviour towards him, nor give him the least encouragement to expect from her any warmer feeling for him than sincere and grateful regard.

CHAPTER IX.

FAITHFULNESS.



THE day after Sarah's encounter with Jim in the hayfield Mrs. Grummerly made her appearance at the carver's, and manifestly not in the sweetest of tempers. All the members of the family were at work together when the old woman came in, and no one greeted her very cordially. However, she seated herself on a stool unbidden, and exclaimed,—

“So, Mr. Totts, you've got a regular fighting-cock in your house, I see. It has generally been supposed that you are rather a peaceable lot, but it don't look like it now. A pity your apprentice don't enlist and go to the wars; he would get his fill of fighting then.”

“Softly, softly, madam,” said John Totts to his excited visitor, who was working herself up into a perfect fury. “You have no grounds for what you

are saying. Robert is as quiet and peaceable a lad as is to be found all the country round."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other with a snort and a toss of her head; "do you call it peaceable in him to go and pitch into my nephew Jim, and knock two of his teeth down his throat and half the breath out of his body?"

"Pray when did he act in this way, Mrs. Grummerly?"

"When, Mr. Totts? Why, yesterday afternoon, to be sure."

"And I am quite convinced, Mrs. Grummerly, that nothing of the sort happened at the time you name. Robert, it is true, interfered because your Jim would not loose his grasp from Sarah's arm when she begged him more than once to do so; and in interfering Robert gave Jim a flooring push, but he never struck him at all."

"A likely tale, indeed!" cried the old woman; "and you expect me to believe it, Mr. Totts?"

"I cannot say as to that," replied the carver; "but I believe it myself. Robert and Sarah, when not together, have each given me exactly the same account of what happened."

"I daresay they have, Mr. Totts; but Jim's story is quite the other way."

"Perhaps so, Mrs. Grummerly," said the carver;

then he added very seriously, "I have never seen the slightest untruthfulness in either of my young people; can you honestly say the same of your nephew?"

The poor woman tried to answer, but could not manage it, for Jim, unhappily, was notorious for lying, and his aunt had frequently deplored this fault in him to John Totts among others. "Ah, well!" she said at last, "every one for their own. I shall caution Jim to keep well out of Robert's and Sarah's way for the future. You're fond of proverbs, Mr. Totts; well, here's one pretty much to the point: 'One man may steal a horse, while another mayn't look over a hedge.' Your Sarah has got all the luck, Jim's as well as her own."

"I don't think," said the other gravely, "that good luck is much in any of our lines. And if your Jim will only speak the truth, keep his hands to himself, and do his work thoroughly and faithfully, he will win his way as well as any one else."

"Ah! there again," cried the old woman peevishly; "you're on one of your pet subjects again. Surely a body may do a bit of work well without being as particular as yourself?"

"I don't think that, Mrs. Grummerly. The holy Book says, 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.'"

"Very true, Mr. Totts,—that's in the Bible, no doubt; but I don't imagine you'll find many acting in that way."

"I fear not, ma'am; but that don't alter its being the right way."

"Well, but where's the harm?" cried Mrs. Grummerly. "When you think of the poor pay many of us get for our work, I'm sure we can't afford to spend so much time and pains on it as you would make out that we ought to."

"But does not the scripture say again, neighbour, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might'? Ay, and so we ought."

"And so *you* do, John, I'm sure," said Mrs. Totts to her husband with a happy smile.

"Oh, no doubt," said the visitor with a dash of bitterness in her tone. "We all know what sort of work your husband turns out, Mrs. Totts. But where's the use, and where's the need? Yes, I well remember noticing the other day how carefully he finished off the under side of a table he was making for Squire Hopkins,—ay, as carefully as if it was the top which every one would see. Now, I call that just waste of time and labour."

"Do you, ma'am?" John observed almost surlily; "but *I* don't, and never shall. If no other human eye ever saw the under work, my own eye had seen

it; and neither my eye nor my conscience would be satisfied with inferior work when I was to be paid for doing my best."

"And do you mean to say, Mr. Totts, that we ought to do every bit of our work as well for others as we would if it were for ourselves?"

"Of course I do, Mrs. Grummerly; and I might even say that, if anything, we ought to do it better. If it were for ourselves, we might sloven over some of it, if we chose, and only be ourselves the losers, for there's loss in all inferior work; but if we do any inferior work for those who pay us not in inferior coin, but with good sterling money, we are wronging and robbing them—it isn't honest."

"You speak strongly indeed, Mr. Totts."

"Yes, ma'am, because I feel strongly. I say again, it isn't honest to take people's good money and give them bad work for it."

"Indeed, Mr. Totts," said the old woman laughing, "you'll have to go far before you find many working-people of your mind."

"I know it, Mrs. Grummerly," was his reply, "and I grieve over it, and am heartily ashamed that it is so. It is this unfaithfulness in work that is one of the crying sins of our day and land. I see it every day nearly."

"Well, I must own," said the other with some

seriousness, "that there is a good deal of truth in what you say there. Certainly work isn't generally done now as it used to be."

"No," chimed in the carver's wife. "Now do you think, Mrs. Grummerly, that the baronet and his good lady would have left you what they did if they had not been satisfied of your faithfulness to them—I mean, that you had always cared for their interests as if they had been your own?"

"True, Mrs. Totts, true; you are right there again. I'm beginning to come over to your husband's side. Yes, I really am ashamed to see the way in which work is done, or only half done, too often now. Why, it was only the other day that I wanted a collar ironed for a friend of mine who is very particular; so I took it to Betsy Higgens, because I knew her to be first-rate at such work, and I had often noticed how beautifully her own things were got up. But—would you believe it?—though Betsy undertook the job, and promised to do her best, the collar was so badly ironed that I was ashamed to send it to my friend; so I washed and ironed it over again myself."

"I can well believe it, ma'am," replied the carver; "and I am very glad you see things a little bit more as I do. I can assure you, Mrs. Grummerly, I am not speaking in this way from mere love of finding

fault, or because I think I do my own work better than any one else. But this unfaithfulness is becoming a more serious matter every day. You'll find it in all departments of work and business. Just look here, all of you." Having said this, he brought out from some obscure corner a small cabinet, made out of some hard and close-grained wood, and inlaid in many places with ivory. "Now," he continued, "you may open every drawer and examine every atom of this cabinet, and you will find the work all of a piece throughout. I need hardly say that it is not my own doing; you can trace the marks of age upon it. But notice how smoothly the little drawers open and shut, how exactly every part fits, and how beautifully the ivory is let in! You don't so often meet with such work now—at least, you may often hear people complaining of being disappointed in the workmanship of similar articles which have cost a heavy price. And so it is with other things: this unfaithfulness shows itself everywhere. How seldom you can depend upon the promise or undertaking of this person or the other. An Englishman's word used to be as good as his bond—what he said, he meant; what he sold, was what it professed to be; what he undertook, he performed. But now, how different you find things commonly! If self

can be served, if a little larger profit can be got, if inferior work can be palmed off upon some inexperienced employer, faithfulness is thrown to the winds."

Here Mrs. Grummerly rose, and turning to the carver, said, "Mr. Totts, let bygones be bygones, if you please. I shall warn our Jim to behave as he ought, and I only wish he would take a lesson from you all sometimes." Thus having said, the old woman took her leave, decidedly the better for her visit.

"Poor old lady," remarked John, when she was fairly out of hearing, "there's some good sense and good feeling in her, after all; and we must try to do her good, and bring her round; and Jim, too, it may be.—And now, Sarah and Robert, you just listen to me. These are days when there's a great danger of our making mistakes about our work, and what we may all of us accomplish.

"Now, Sarah, my child, you are naturally inclined to dash at excellence, just as I've seen a gentleman who came once with a friend to sketch the view of the hills from my workshop door one lovely evening. This gentleman dashed away at his drawing, and hit off the whole thing to perfection in a few bold and vigorous strokes of his brushes; while the other made but tame work of it, and crumpled up his paper when he had done. So it would be with you,

Sarah, if you merely followed your own bent; you would arrive at excellence by dashing away at your work. And this may be all very well in a water-colour drawing; but it wouldn't do to act in this way in ordinary work and pursuits. Not that you do this, my child, for I am pleased to see that you have learned to take pains; and be sure of this, taking pains will never be thrown away. Whatever you do, try to do it your very best right through, and don't in any part grudge pains and patience.

"Now you, Robert, have not got any of Sarah's natural 'dash' about you; but you keep plodding on, and get out of heart sometimes because you can't get on faster. Now, never you mind that: just set your work before you, and resolve, with God's help, to do it the very best you can in every part; and you will be sure to win your way to success, and, possibly, even to eminence. I daresay the Tower of Babel was run up pretty quickly, and with a deal of noise; but it ended in the builders of it and their friends being scattered all over the earth. And as for the tower itself, if it stood, it must have been an abiding reproach and mock to all who looked on it. It was not so with the Temple at Jerusalem. It rose silently and slowly. Every stone in it had been carefully and faithfully shaped before it was brought to be put in. Not a sound of a hammer

was heard in the building of it ; and we know what a wonderful piece of work it was. Ah, shouldn't I have liked a sight of it ! Well, now, Robert, you just go on working in that way : shape out all your work patiently and faithfully, and carry it out with as little fuss and show as possible ; and be certain of this, you will accomplish in the end, by honest industry and painstaking, what genius without these would never bring about.—There ; I've done my lecture."

CHAPTER X.

PROGRESS.



WHEN Sarah Jones had reached the age of sixteen, she was more womanly than girlish in her appearance, having developed rapidly both in body and in mind. Familiar as everybody was with the fact that she was not really the child of John Totts, conjecture and rumour as to her real parentage were very busy from time to time as she grew up. And specially was this the case with the guests at the Hall when they saw Sarah at church standing up to sing a hymn, with one of her supposed parents on either side of her.

"Who is that remarkably sweet and superior-looking young woman who was in the same seat with that sturdy but respectable couple, just a little way down the aisle in front of us?" asked a gentleman friend of the squire, as they were walking home from church one Sunday morning.

"You may well ask," replied the other; "for she is, as you say, very superior-looking. Indeed, her appearance and bearing are altogether remarkable; and so are her abilities and attainments."

"Well, but," said the friend, "she cannot surely be the child of those plain and homely people?"

"No; you are right there; but your first question I cannot answer. It is a puzzle and a mystery to us all. She was left, when an infant, sixteen years ago, in a basket, in John Totts' the carver's house, by nobody-knows-who; and the mystery has never been solved to this day. The good man and his wife, who had lost their only child years before, took to the new baby at once, and have done their duty by her. They are sincere and consistent Christians themselves, and have given their charge a truly religious education; and she has followed in their steps."

"Your story is both very romantic and very interesting," said the other. "And, pray, what name does she go by?"

"Ah! you would little think," replied Mr. Milvert laughing. "They have called her Sarah Jones."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the gentleman.

"Yes," continued the squire; "John and his wife had the good sense to adopt a homely name for her; and yet the girl is, in truth, a genius."

"And of gentle blood, too, you may be sure," remarked the squire's friend; "why, look at her eyes, her shape, her graceful carriage of herself; all speak out, as it were, 'I'm no labourer's child.' She might shine in a nobleman's drawing-room."

"True, my friend," said the other; "and yet she has no such ambition—she is simplicity and contentment itself."

"Oh, then, she doesn't despise the good people who have adopted her?"

"Dear me, no!—nothing of the sort; she is too truly noble-minded and too genuine a Christian to entertain such a feeling for a moment."

"But do you think she is happy where and as she is?"

"Perfectly so, I believe. And, then, she lives in a world of her own;—she is both an artist and a poetess."

"And has she no ambition?"

"Not that I am aware of. You see how simply and with what admirable taste she dresses. Though she cannot but be aware of her own beauty and superiority of appearance, yet she never cares to study personal adornment. She is quite above the littleness of dress-worship."

"Truly a most singular and striking character," said the squire's friend thoughtfully. "She will

turn out somebody, sooner or later, you may be sure."

"So I think myself more and more every time I see her," replied Mr. Milvert. "In the meanwhile she is in good hands; for John Totts himself is more than two-thirds of a genius, and has been able to furnish her head with abundance of useful learning and knowledge."

"And what about companions of her own age and sex?" asked the friend.

"Ah! there has been a decided want there," was the reply.

"John has kept her from any intimacy with the parish girls who frequent our school; and there are no others except my own Clara, and of course John Totts has never thought of thrusting her upon us, or suing for Sarah companionship with our daughter. But I believe it would be a good thing for both; and I intend myself to make a move in that direction."

"I think, Milvert, you will be doing just the right and the best thing there," said the friend; and with this the conversation dropped. Nothing, however, was done by the squire towards bringing about any companionship or friendly intercourse between his own daughter and Sarah Jones.

Some months passed by after this talk with his

friend, and the matter had nearly faded out of his memory, when it was brought back one morning by a call from the carver, who came to ask the squire if he could lend him a particular book which he wished to consult on some antiquarian subject which was specially interesting him at the time. The book was not in the squire's library, and he was going to change the subject and speak to John about Sarah, but, observing that his visitor was very anxious to get a sight of the book, he said to him—

“Have you ever been to Oxford, Mr. Totts?”

“Never, squire.”

“Well, then, I would go if I were you, and that, too, without loss of time. A man as fond of antiquities as you are ought to visit that noble university: it would be a perfect feast to you; and you would be sure to find the book you are seeking, in the Bodleian Library. I know one or two of the heads of colleges intimately, and if you have a mind to go over for a bit of a holiday, I will give you a letter to one of my friends there; and he will, I am sure, put you in the way of seeing everything of interest, including the book you want, and some rare old manuscripts, which will delight you.”

“Thank you very heartily, squire,” replied John Totts warmly. “Curiously enough, I’ve often

thought I would have a run over to Oxford one of these days; but then something or other has always stood in the way. Well, but as I am getting old, and may soon become too infirm to take holidays away from home, I will follow your advice, and avail myself of your offer, and will set off this day week, for I have a visit on a matter of business to pay to a cousin of mine who lives not twenty miles from Oxford; so I can kill two birds with one stone, as the saying is."

The squire was much pleased at his humble friend so readily taking his advice, and sat down there and then, and wrote a letter to the head of one of the colleges, and gave it to the carver. He would have spoken also about Sarah, but thought that perhaps it would be better not to broach the subject till John's return. So they parted with a warmer grip of the hand on both sides than usual.

And now, as John Totts walked homewards, pondering many things, it occurred to him that it might do Robert Mason a great deal of good in many ways if he were to take him with him to Oxford. So when he got home, he called Robert into the workshop, and began at once as follows:—

"Robert, I'm going to Oxford next week."

"You, master!" exclaimed the apprentice.

"Yes, Robert; and I am going to take you with me."

"Take me, master!"

"Yes, take you, Robert. It will do us both a deal of good."

Robert could hardly believe his ears, but he knew that John Totts was not the man to say what he did not mean, even in jest; so, with a face red up to his hair, he stammered out his thanks, and then ran out of the workshop into the house.

"Sarah," he cried, "I'm going with your father to Oxford! won't that be grand for me?"

"That it will, Robert," she replied with a bright smile. "Won't you see a number of curious old things? And what a feast you will have in the libraries! I shall quite enjoy it for you."

"And you will be pleased to see me back again?" he asked, in an almost tearful voice.

"Oh, yes, of course, Robert; but you must not speak in such a dismal tone. Why, you are not going for ever so long to some foreign land. Yes, I shall be glad, of course, to see you and dear father back again, and to hear all the wonderful things you will have to tell."

Robert said no more, but left the room with downcast eyes.

In due time the visit to Oxford was paid. It

need scarcely be said that John Totts enjoyed himself most thoroughly. The letter he took with him from Mr. Milvert obtained for him the kindest attention from the head of the college to whom it was addressed, who saw at once that the plain working man commended to his notice and good offices was no ordinary character. So he made time to act himself as the carver's guide to the principal objects of interest and attraction, and felt more than repaid for his trouble by the delight and intelligent appreciation shown by John Totts and his apprentice. Magdalen Tower, St. Mary's spire and porch, the old oak carvings, but above all, the ancient manuscripts, afforded unbounded pleasure to the carver, and called forth expressions of the warmest admiration. And, to crown all, he was able to find the book he wanted, in the Bodleian Library, and was permitted to copy some passages from it.

Robert, too, was deeply impressed with the beauty and symmetry of the architectural gems of the university; but the books and the college gardens had the greatest charm for him. As he entered with his master and their kind guide into the beautiful grounds connected with New College, his eyes fell on the motto on a scroll which formed a part of the massive iron gates—"*Manners makyth man.*" These words stuck in his mind;

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indeed he could not get them out of his thoughts, and even dreamt of them at night—which specially impressed them on his memory, as dreaming was very little in his line.

On their return, Sarah was delighted to hear both from her father and from Robert a full account of all that they had seen and heard. The effect of the visit was exactly opposite on the master and his apprentice. John Totts came back humbled. He had been so long looked upon, talked about, and spoken to as a *big* man for intellect and skill, that what he had seen took him down considerably in his own estimation.

“Ah!” he remarked, when the family were gathered together at the tea-table on the evening of his return, “I thought I knew a thing or two more than some, before I went to Oxford; but now I feel as if I knew nothing, and am only a mere bungler at my work.”

“Nay, John,” cried his wife; “you’ve no cause to say that. I’m sure I’ve heard scores of persons who have spent years at Oxford say that your work will match any that is to be seen there.”

“Nonsense, nonsense, my good wife,” was his reply; “it’s all very well meant when people talk in that way, but it is not wise, for I know better; and I hope it has done me good to be made to feel

how small I am after all. Remember how the holy scripture says, 'Before honour is humility.' I don't doubt I wanted the conceit taken out of me."

Sarah looked across the table lovingly at him, and said gently, "No doubt, dear father, we all of us want to be taught more deeply a lesson in humility; but if God has been teaching you a lesson in that school, we shall none of us be less proud of you and your work for all that."

John returned her loving look, and nodded his head gravely.

With Robert Mason the visit to Oxford had operated differently. He had come back decidedly elevated in spirit. Why should he not aim higher? What a fine thing it would be for him to become a real scholar, and to get sent to the university! While his master had been examining the manuscripts, he had himself got into conversation with an old man, a scout of one of the colleges, who had told him that the porter of the college where he served had a son who had got a scholarship by diligence and steady reading; had gone through the university course; taken his Bachelor of Arts degree; and was now a clergyman. To this statement Robert had listened with the most intense interest; so the old man, remarking this, had said

to him, "There's no reason whatever, young man, why you shouldn't do the same, if your mind is set that way." These words had settled down deeply in Robert's mind, and it had now become an abiding thought with him—"Why should not *I*, too, study, get a scholarship, become an Oxford man, take my degree, be ordained as a clergyman, get a living, and—?" Well, he did not like to give definite shape even in his thoughts to what was to follow that "and." Certainly Sarah Jones had something to do with it. But he had come back changed, as all could see. Not that he was less diligent, faithful, or obliging; but he manifestly held his head higher than he used to do.

"What's up with the lad?" said Mrs. Totts one day to her husband when they were alone.

"Oh, it's all right," was his reply, laughing. "It'll do Robert no harm. He thinks that he can become a scholar; and I daresay he can, with pains and perseverance. Indeed I've no doubt of it, if he set to work in earnest; for pains and perseverance can accomplish wonders; and it is by the little steps that the great heights are gained, as you have often heard me say."


Mrs. Totts was contented, but not so Sarah Jones; for she could not help seeing and feeling that Robert Mason was aiming at herself in his new

efforts. He would look at her, at times, in a way which annoyed and even distressed her; for she felt that it would be wrong in her to encourage hopes in him which she could not wish him to cherish. He partly saw this; nevertheless, he was determined to make a grand effort, and perhaps the barrier that now stood in the way of the accomplishment of his heart's one leading desire would give way of itself. So, in the first place, he resolved upon improving his manners. He had thought much on this subject. The little motto on New College gates, "Manners makyth man," still remained in force in his memory. He was charmed, therefore, when, while looking over a bookstall the next time he was sent on an errand to the neighbouring town, he lighted on a curious old folio, which seemed to be just the guide he wanted. It was entitled, "The Perfecte Gentlemanne: setting forth the how he should carrye himselfe to alle, both highe and lowe." It had a very elaborate frontispiece, representing the "perfecte gentlemanne" in slashed doublet and hose, wearing a sword, and looking out on society in general with an air of dignified self-complacency. Beneath this figure were these lines:—

"Here, courteous reader, you may plainly see
The perfecte gentlemanne's true effigie."

Robert gladly paid the price marked on the book, which was only a few pence, and carried it home as secretly as possible, and carefully studied it as opportunity was afforded him of doing so without being observed.

The result of this study was rather peculiar; for it led Robert to guide every movement and gesture according to the rules of the highest breeding, as these were laid down in his folio, and thus to adopt habits of speech and behaviour utterly unsuitable to one in his position, and such as made John and his wife fear that he must have got a little twist in his brain somehow or other. As for Sarah Jones, she was at first highly entertained by Robert's new airs and graces and affectation of extraordinary polish and elegance of demeanour. She would laugh very heartily at some exaggerated phrase or ungainly attempt at graceful motion on his part. But when she saw how this distressed him, she checked her merriment, and just looked on with a puzzled expression. Once, however, she was so completely upset by his proceedings, that she burst out into peal after peal of mirth, to the utter discomfiture of the poor apprentice, and the amazement and almost alarm of the carver and his wife, who came rushing into the room where Sarah was giving vent to this unprecedented vehemence of the outward expression



of her amusement. And, certainly, what they beheld struck them dumb with amazement and apprehension. In the middle of the parlour stood Robert Mason dressed in his Sunday garments, and wearing, in addition to these, a long sword or rapier, suspended from an old leathern belt with which he was girded! As the carver and his wife hurried into the room, Sarah pointed to the poor young man, and again went off into perfect peals of laughter.

"What does it all mean?" exclaimed John Totts in utter dismay; for, as he looked at the crestfallen figure of Robert, who was now hanging his head in very shame, while the sword kept bumping on the ground as he trembled from head to foot, there arose a misgiving that the unfortunate apprentice had gone out of his mind. However, in a minute or so he began to think differently. It must be some piece of fun or practical joke on Robert's part to amuse or to tease Sarah. So he said, "Come, Robert, my boy; enough of this sort of play. Whatever are you doing with that old rapier? There! there's a time for everything, as the scripture says; you have had your time for sport, so put the old sword into its place, and get to your work again."

"All right, master," replied Robert in a low voice, and colouring deeply. Then with a sigh of relief

he disappeared, and presently came back to his work in his ordinary dress, and for the rest of the day scarcely uttered a word.

"What's it all about, Sarah, my child?" asked John Totts, when poor Robert had slunk away.

"Indeed, father," she replied, her voice still unsteady with scarcely suppressed laughter, "I can hardly tell you, but perhaps this book may explain it;" saying which she handed to the carver the old folio, which was lying on the ground near the spot where Robert had been making such an exhibition of himself.

John Totts took the book from her hands, and turned over its leaves slowly, gazing at their contents with knitted brows. Then he betook himself to his workshop, carrying the old volume with him. Examining it more closely when he was alone, he found a leaf turned down at a chapter which was headed, "How y^e perfecte gentlemanne carries his sworde." The chapter itself gave minute directions how to move about gracefully in company, specially in the company of ladies, so as to exhibit this weapon to the best advantage, and not to allow it to embarrass or get in the way of its wearer. Of course these directions were written at a time when it was the fashion for a gentleman to wear a sword at all times. For a while the carver mused over

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the black letter with a puzzled air. At last light seemed to dawn into his mind. He closed the book with a sigh, and then put it out of sight; but he said not a word about it or about what had happened, either to Robert or to any other member of the family, that day. On the morrow, however, when master and man were in the workshop by themselves, John Totts brought the old book out from its hiding-place, and, handing it over to his companion, said: "Robert, my lad, this is yours, I believe. Well, just take a bit of advice from me. There's a better book than this for teaching manners; there's the good old Book—the blessed Word of God. Take that for your guide, and you won't and can't go wrong. Be simple, be natural; don't try what won't suit you—don't ape the fine gentleman, for it won't suit you nor me. The true Christian is a true gentleman in every rank of life. Aim at that, Robert; you can't aim higher. Let alone every sword except the sword of the Spirit; and put the 'Perfecte Gentlemanne' into the closet, or behind the fire."

Robert did not reply at once, but he was deeply moved; and when he did speak at last, there were tears both in his eyes and in his voice. "Master," he said, "you are right; I'll take your advice. I've made a precious fool of myself; but I hope to do

better for the future. I don't know if I can exactly explain—"

"Never mind explaining, Robert; I can make a shrewd guess, and there's no need to make any more trouble about it. 'All's well that ends well,' as the proverb says."

The poor young man was more than satisfied, and thanked his master very heartily; and then both turned to their work which they had in hand with a thorough good-will. But it may be well just to let the reader into the secret of Robert Mason's strange conduct. The fact was that he had read the chapter in his folio about the proper way for a gentleman to wear a sword, with a considerable puzzle in his mind. Of course, he knew that the days when gentlemen generally wore swords were gone by long ago; and he was about to pass on to another chapter, when he remembered that there was an old sword hanging up in the inner parlour; and it came into his mind that, if he were now and then to buckle on this sword, when no one was by to see him do it, and were to walk up and down for a few minutes with it girded to him according to the directions in his folio, it might perhaps be the means of his acquiring a grace and ease in his movements generally, so that he might improve in his way of carrying himself: for he was quite

aware of the awkwardness of his own movements when he compared them with those of the squire or any of his high-bred friends. So he made his first experiment at a time when he felt sure that neither Mrs. Totts nor Sarah would be downstairs so as to be able to see him. But it so happened that in the very midst of his first lesson, which he was giving himself with the folio lying open before him, Sarah, having to fetch something, came upon Robert as he was moving this way and that with an affectation of easy grace, now bowing to this imaginary lady, and now offering his arm to that; while the sword, getting between his legs, caused him to give a sudden jump, and to utter a loud exclamation. The whole thing, therefore, not unnaturally appeared to Sarah Jones so intensely ludicrous, and was to her so utterly unexpected and inexplicable, that she could not repress her laughter, and so brought about poor Robert's utter confusion. What it all meant she could not conjecture for a while, but by degrees she came to have a glimmering of light on the subject, and became pretty sure that Robert was trying some strange experiment in order to make himself less awkward and clumsy in his movements; and, doubtless, in this he had an eye to please her—so she felt—and therefore most thankful was she to hear him say to John Totts, a few days later, that he had

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made a bonfire of the old folio, and hoped to be wiser for the future. This she accidentally overheard, and it gave her great satisfaction; for she trusted that Robert would henceforth be content to win and keep her esteem and good favour by just going on in the way plainly marked out for him, doing his work and duty so as to please God, and not with a special design to please her. John Totts also was much gratified with Robert's good sense and right action in the matter, and took pains to encourage him in prosecuting his studies in every way that he could.

"There, Robert," he said one day, "there's no reason why you should not be a fine scholar, though you won't make a fine gentleman. Squire Milvert sent me over a lot of books this forenoon, saying that they were books of his own which he had done with, and that if any of them were of any use or value to me, I am quite welcome to them. So I say the same to you. Look through them, Robert; perhaps some of them may help you to acquire solid and useful learning."

Thanking his master very warmly, the young man went to the pile of books which were heaped up near his master's bench. He turned them carefully over, and then picked out a Greek grammar and a companion Latin grammar. "May I have

these, master?" he asked. "By all means, Robert," replied the carver; "they wouldn't suit me, but you are welcome to use them, and I don't doubt but what, with patience and perseverance, you'll make something out of them in time." And so it turned out. By the end of six months Robert Mason had mastered the two grammars, and also had gone through some exercise-books very creditably, and to the entire satisfaction of the vicar of the parish, who, at John Totts's request, had lent Robert some elementary Latin and Greek books, and had himself looked through and corrected Robert's exercises and translations.

"So I find, John Totts," said the squire to the carver one day, as they were walking together along a field pathway, "that you have a regular nursery for geniuses up at your house: the vicar tells me that your apprentice is going to surprise the world some day as a Greek and Latin scholar."

"Well, sir," replied the other, "as for Robert's surprising the world, I can't say. He certainly has surprised me a little; but he is no genius, and never will be. No doubt he has an aptitude for learning languages, like Elihu Burritt, the famous American blacksmith, and I think he will make a good scholar."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mr. Milvert. "You

know how I like to encourage merit in head or hand work among my people, and I am sure I shall be most happy to lend Robert a helping hand, should he persevere and succeed in his studies."

"Thank you, squire," said the other; "that's just it: Robert has what is better to secure success than genius—he has patience and perseverance, and plods away at his studies as he does at his manual work. Mind you, sir, I should never encourage him to learn Greek and Latin if I saw that it led him to neglect his proper work for me. But that is not his way, I am glad to say. No; he is a faithful lad, and never spends *my* time at his books, but only what I allow him for himself. He rises early and sits up late—almost too early and too late, I sometimes fear; but never does he neglect or hurry over the work I give him to do."

"I am heartily glad to hear that," said the squire; "and this makes me more hopeful still that he may one day gain himself distinction as a scholar. I shall keep my eye upon him."

"Thank you, sir. Well, if he gets to great heights, it will be by little steps, for that's the way in which great heights are usually gained, as I often tell him."

"Just so, Mr. Totts. Well, pray say to him from me that he is welcome to read any book in my

library, and that I shall be much pleased to find him making progress."

The carver thanked the squire, and told Robert Mason of his kind offer. The young man was delighted; and, availing himself of this permission to use the books at the Hall, he soon made rapid advances in classical and other book knowledge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COPY OF VERSES.



IT was on a lovely morning in May that Mr. Fellowes was sitting at breakfast with Squire Milvert, his wife, and daughter in the library at the Hall. Clara was now just twenty years of age, for this was her birthday. As all were partaking of the early meal, the butler brought in a neatly-folded brown paper packet, and placed it on the table, close to Clara's right hand.

"Dear me! what can this be?" exclaimed she.

"A birthday present, of course," said her mother smiling, as Clara unfolded the parcel, having first set free a beautiful bunch of lilies-of-the-valley, which had been carefully attached to it outside.

"From whom can it be?" exclaimed the squire.

"I think I know," said his wife. "It was only the day before yesterday that I was admiring the profusion of these charming flowers growing in

Sarah Jones's own little garden; they are her favourite flower."

"You are right, dear mother," said Clara, for she had now laid bare the contents of the parcel: "this is a birthday gift to me from Sarah Jones. How kind of her! And, oh, is it not beautiful?" So saying, she handed to Mrs. Milvert an elaborately carved picture-frame, enclosing a drawing in water-colours of the Hall and its surroundings, beautifully executed. The birthday offering was passed from hand to hand, and duly admired by all at the table.

"I suppose," said Mr. Fellowes, "this is the work of the young person to whom I, at your request, adjudged the art prize some six years ago."

"You are right," replied the squire; "and she certainly is turning out something extraordinary.—But what have you there, Clara?"

"Only a short accompanying letter; shall I read it aloud, father?"

"Oh, please," said Mr. Fellowes, "if we may all have the privilege of hearing it."

The letter, which was as follows, was then read out by Miss Milvert:—

"DEAR MISS CLARA,—Knowing this to be your birthday, I have taken the liberty to offer you a piece of my own work, as a token of my respectful

good-will to yourself, and as a little acknowledgment, through you, of my gratitude to your father for his kindness to my dear father on many occasions, and more especially in connection with his visit to Oxford. I have also ventured to express my sincere desire for your truest happiness in a few verses, which you will find wrapped round the stalks of the bunch of lilies-of-the-valley, which come from my own little garden. May God make you abundantly happy on this and many another birthday.—
Your respectful young friend,

“SARAH JONES.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Mr. Fellowes, “you certainly have got a Phoenix amongst you. May we have the additional pleasure of hearing the verses?”

“Certainly,” replied Clara, unfolding, at the same time, a neat little scroll of white paper which had been wound round the stems of the lilies. Then she read out in a clear voice, which trembled a little as she proceeded, the following simple lines:—

“Lady, accept my flowers; oh, may they be
Teachers of holy character to thee.
May’st thou, like them, show stainless purity;
Like them, be clothed with humility;
Like them, be glorious in simplicity;
Like them, be fragrant to each passer-by;
Like them, receive the smile of Jesu’s eye;
And—not like them—bloom on, and never die.—S. J.”

Clara's eyes filled with tears as she finished the verses ; but every one heard them distinctly.

"Truly," cried Mr. Fellowes, "you have good reason, Clara, to be proud of such a birthday present."

"Yes, indeed," said the squire ; "and what a nice spirit the letter shows in what Sarah says about my kindness to her father ! I am sure I have felt it to be a privilege as well as a duty to do any little service that lay in my power to such a man. And you see that she makes much of what I did, and renders me a return, through Clara, in the only way in which any return could be made without hurting my feelings."

"Yes, I see it all," said the guest.—"I suppose the worthy carver is not a man whom you could help in the way of pecuniary assistance."

"Oh, dear no !" exclaimed Mr. Milvert ; "I should as soon think of offering such assistance to the Queen herself as to John Totts. He is the most independent-minded man anywhere about, and, indeed, stands in need of no help but such as his own skilful hands can procure, and have procured him,—nay, I doubt not that John has a nice little sum laid by, so that for his position he is doubtless a rich man, and far more likely to help a poor neighbour out of a difficulty with his purse than to need any such assistance himself."

"Ah," said Mr. Fellowes thoughtfully, "then such a man's good-will and even friendship might be desired and sought by the noblest and greatest in the land. But what a pity it is that this adopted child of his has not more opportunity of mixing with her equals, not in worldly position, but in intellect and true refinement of tastes, and moral worth."

"Oh," exclaimed Clara, "I am so glad to hear you say this, Mr. Fellowes; for perhaps my dear father and mother will sanction my getting into closer intercourse with Sarah Jones. Not that I claim to be her equal in mind or ability, for she is just simply a genius, but, nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that, were she to become, in some degree my companion, it might be good for us both."

"Exactly my own view," cried her father; "and I know that your mother would not put any hindrance in the way. So, if you like to invite Sarah now and then to spend an afternoon with you here in a friendly way, there will be no objection on our parts, and good may come out of it.—What do you think, Fellowes?"

"It will be good for both in many ways, no doubt," replied the friend; "and yet—"

"Oh," exclaimed Mr. Milvert, "you see a little hitch, then?"

"I do, but I must explain myself. There can be

no doubt that for Clara to rub her mind in familiar intercourse against Sarah Jones's mind would be an excellent thing for your daughter. And it is equally clear to me that it would be useful also to Sarah. I mean, if she is one day to get up into the society in which we all believe that her real parents move, or did move, it would be of advantage to her to acquire something of that outward polish which nothing but mingling with persons above her present position could give. And yet it would be hard for her to move about in this Hall, feeling really on an equality with your daughter in any sense. The old carver's cottage, and the homely ways of himself and his wife, would fling, as it were, a shadow across her path. She would feel herself more or less out of place, and even out of duty, in accepting, though but for a little while, a position of equality and friendship with Clara, however willing you might all be to grant her such a position now and then. While still reputed to be the child of John Totts, with that queer old dwelling for her home, she could not *be* the lady, however naturally she might *play* the character, and however certain it may be that she is really entitled by gentle birth to assume such a character."

"I think I understand you," said the squire, in a rather disappointed tone; "and yet it seems a pity

that a young person of such abilities, acquirements, and refinement of mind, should not gain, as I believe she might by occasional intercourse with Clara and ourselves, some knowledge of how to move in a sphere which it is by no means impossible that she may some day be called on to live in."

"True," said his friend gravely; "no doubt such occasional intercourse would do her good and polish her up a bit; and Clara would find both pleasure and benefit in holding out a warm hand to this very interesting young person. But I think that the other—I mean Sarah Jones—wants something different from this, if I may say so without unkindness; for—don't misunderstand me—your scheme is a most kind and considerate one, only, though it must sound a little like a contradiction or paradox, I think you and she might be drawn closer together if only you were farther off from one another."

"Well," remarked the squire, after a minute's pause, "we must think it over, and do what we can; perhaps something better will suggest itself."

"I daresay it will," said Mr. Fellowes: "indeed, I have myself a little idea on the subject buzzing about in my brain; but about this I will say no more at present."

CHAPTER XII.

INTO THE WORLD.



THAT same afternoon Mr. Fellowes walked down alone to the carver's dwelling. Clara Milvert had already been there to express her warm thanks to Sarah Jones for her beautiful birthday present and the accompanying verses. Sarah had accepted the thanks modestly, but evidently feeling them to be her due. Clara perceived this, and a painful sense of inferiority made her rather shrink from closer intimacy, or at any rate from anything like real friendship, between herself and John Totts's adopted child. She was too noble-minded to cherish envious or jealous sentiments towards Sarah; and yet she could not help drawing back into herself when in the presence of one inferior to herself in worldly position, whom she yet dared not attempt to patronize. If Sarah was below her socially, she was above her intellectually; and so the consciousness of this on the part

of the squire's daughter would make anything approaching to unrestricted companionship between the two very difficult, at least under present circumstances. Mr. Fellowes fully understood and appreciated this position of the two young people towards each other, and now betook himself to the carver's house with a scheme in his head and in his heart which he wished to propound to John, for the real benefit, as he believed, of Sarah Jones, in whom he had come to take an extraordinary interest. He found the worthy mechanic in his workshop, engaged on a very nice and intricate piece of carving.

"Can you spare me ten minutes or a quarter of an hour for a little private conversation, Mr. Totts?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir," replied the other. "Pray be seated, if you don't mind trying that high-backed chair. It is not a very inviting-looking seat, I allow, but it has in days gone by given rest to the great and the noble."

"Thank you, my good friend, it will do admirably," said Mr. Fellowes, seating himself; "but—"

"Oh," said John Totts, "you need not fear any interruption; no one is likely to be disturbing us just now."

"Thank you, Mr. Totts; but—"

"Oh, I see," said the other laughing: "you are

afraid I shall not give you real attention if I go on with my work while we are talking. Now it's just the other way with me. When I have got my bit of work thoroughly planned, I can talk away with a friend and give him my best attention; and my handiwork helps rather than hinders, for it serves as a sort of index or table of reference. I mean, that I can call to mind or recover the different passages of an argument or discussion, for instance, and the conclusion arrived at, by running my eye over the piece of work I was engaged on at the time. So it was with the carving of yonder pulpit, which a good lady is going to present to her parish church. The bishop came over to my shop when I was working at that pulpit, and we had a pretty brisk set-to on the subject of apostolical succession. I was just finishing off that wall-flower when I hit his lordship pretty hard—I mean in argument; and I never look at that bit of carving without recalling all the pros and cons of our discussion. So, if you will just begin your say, you shall have my best attention to it, and my hands need be none the less busy all the time."

Having said thus, the carver dropped a little oil on to a stone, and began sharpening one of his chisels. Mr. Fellowes looked on much amused, and then began:—

"Well, Mr. Totts, I came over to have a talk with you about your Sarah. We are all greatly delighted with her nice present to Miss Milvert, and with the verses which were sent with it. You certainly have got a treasure in Sarah."

"I am glad you think so highly of her," replied the carver in a not very interested tone of voice, while at the same time, with knit brows and intent gaze, he scooped away at some almost hidden portion of his work. Then he added, with less coldness of manner: "You are right, sir; I don't believe that you can estimate her too highly. I don't mean merely because she has such skill in her fingers and such thoughts in her head, but because she has both hand and head, ay, and heart too, all under the control and guidance of the highest religious principle."

"Indeed," cried the visitor, "I can well believe it, and am truly glad to hear it."

"Yes, sir," continued John; "she is so thoroughly unselfish and heavenly-minded—I could scarcely understand it for a time; but I do so now more and more. My wife and myself have been her teachers for a long time, but she is teaching *us* some rare lessons now. I often think of the words of the blessed Book as I watch her life and character: 'A little child shall lead them.'"

"And yet," remarked Mr. Fellowes, "she does

not look much like one who would assume the office of teacher."

"Assume!" exclaimed the other; "no, indeed, sir; she neither assumes nor presumes—it isn't in her. She knows her own powers, it is true—she can't help that; but at the same time she is 'clothed with humility.' She teaches quite unconsciously. Her lessons are object-lessons, life-pictures, which we cannot help marking and learning from."

"Pardon me, my friend," said the other; "I quite understand you. Such a character is as beautiful as it is rare."

"It is so, Mr. Fellowes; and we cannot help seeing that Sarah's first and special ambition is just to do in all things what will please and exalt not herself but her Saviour. For this she lives; in this she finds her happiness. Not that she despises ordinary things; not that she thinks it wrong to strive after perfection in such works of head or hand as she has been made to shine in. She is no visionary or fanatic, only she puts her own progress in art and knowledge in the second and not in the first place."

Mr. Fellowes listened with the deepest attention, and John Totts suspended his carving for a few moments as he observed the earnest look of his visitor, who, after a brief silence, proceeded thus:—

"You must pardon me, Mr. Totts, if in what I am going to say I unintentionally wound your feelings. Be sure I mean only kindness."

"Well, sir?"

"It strikes me," continued Mr. Fellowes, "that one so gifted as your Sarah Jones, is designed by God himself to attain to eminence as an artist and thinker, and to take up in time a position where she will be able to shine in a way which she could hardly do if—"

He paused, but John Totts at once took up his words and finished his sentence for him. "If she lived, you mean, sir, all her life hid away in this obscure place. Well, sir, I agree with you there, and I have felt this often. But there is no remedy, so her light must shine on a clay candlestick instead of an elegant chandelier."

"Ah, but I don't see this, Mr. Totts; and here we come to the point. I see that you agree with me that such abilities as your Sarah's should have every opportunity given them of being cultivated to the uttermost. One capable of mounting to a high and noble platform should do so if possible, and thus throw out her light far more widely than she could do by remaining on a much lower level. There is nothing wrong, but quite the contrary, in desiring such an exalted position for her. Indeed, with such

abilities and tastes, she may shine brighter and more brightly for the heavenly Master whom it is her delight to serve, by reaching the eminence which I believe she was originally designed for."

"Perfectly true, sir," replied the carver; "but I don't see my way at present to give her wide scope or lift her up on to a higher level; and as for courting the notice of those in a more exalted rank, it doesn't suit either Sarah or me."

"Of course not, Mr. Totts. Well, without more beating about the bush, I will say out at once that I have an offer to make, and you must not misunderstand me, nor my motives in making it. I was greatly struck with Sarah when I first saw her, as a child of ten years of age, when she carried off the art prize which I had adjudged to her; and what I see and hear of her now has increased my interest tenfold. Now I am an old widower, and live in London with a widowed sister to look after my house. I should feel it to be a privilege to give your Sarah a home with me, say for a couple of years, and to get her masters such as can be found only in London, and to introduce her to companions of her own sex, and of that rank of life which—if I may say so without offence—she was born to, and was designed by her heavenly Father to walk in sooner or later. Now my sister is an earnest Christian,

and one of your own way of thinking on religious subjects, as I believe that I am myself. We should introduce Sarah to no companions but such as we have good reason and hope to believe love the same Saviour whom Sarah feels it her happiness to serve. And as for expense, that is of no consequence at all. My means are ample, and I should esteem it an honour to be made in any way instrumental in bringing forward your Sarah to occupy the platform which she is made and designed to occupy. There, Mr. Totts, you have my offer. I shall not be leaving the Hall till next week. What I have said is strictly of a private nature ; but of course you are at liberty to talk over the matter with your wife and Sarah. May I see you here again if I stroll down the day after to-morrow ? ”

John Totts made no immediate reply, but stretched out his hand and wrung Mr. Fellowes’s hand heartily. Then he said, being manifestly much moved: “ I do sincerely thank you, sir, for your most generous offer ; but you can understand that I hardly know, at the moment, what to think or say about it, it has taken me so completely by surprise. I will, however, be prepared with an answer two days hence. I shall be here, and will be looking for you.”

Mr. Fellowes then rose and left the workshop,

and the two parted with very cordial expressions of mutual good-will.

On the appointed day Mr. Fellowes met John Totts in his shop, and was welcomed by his humble friend with a bright smile. But for a minute or two neither spoke, Mr. Fellowes being apparently as much interested as the carver himself in the piece of oak carving which the latter was just finishing off. At last the artisan laid aside his chisel, and seating himself on a bench close to his visitor, grasped him warmly by the hand, but yet said nothing. Then, to the surprise and strong emotion of Mr. Fellowes, the head of the sturdy workman bowed itself till it rested on the other's shoulder, and tears flowed copiously from those eyes which ordinarily were little used to "the melting mood." But the two men thoroughly understood each other, and Mr. Fellowes purposely held back from making any observation, leaving it to the carver to open the conversation; at the same time, by a kindly squeeze of the mechanic's rugged fingers, assuring him of his sympathy. At last the silence was broken by the trembling and half-whispered utterance of John Totts.

"I see, Mr. Fellowes, that you understand me, and feel for me. I have made up my mind to part with Sarah to you for a year or two, or even more

if need be; but it will be like tearing the very heart out of my bosom. However, it will be for her good, as both my wife and myself see it, and so it will have to be done.—And how shall we thank yourself? We know that you would never have made such an offer lightly, or without having turned the matter about and looked at it from all sides. On the other hand, we are certain that any house, did it belong to the noblest man in the land, would be blessed by having Sarah's light and life shining in it."

Mr. Fellowes was profoundly affected by this address, and could hardly trust himself to reply. At last he said: "My excellent friend, I perfectly understand and fully appreciate every word you have uttered. You are right: what I desire is your Sarah's real good, and the good of others too, by helping her to occupy a position in which she may be able to do justice to the abilities with which she has been endowed. And I am sure that you have no cause to fear that we shall be trying to draw away in the least degree her affections from yourselves and her country home."

"Ah," exclaimed the carver, "thank you for these words. But no; I don't believe that London life, London friends, and London opportunities for culture and improvement will make her despise the old

home and those who have adopted her and loved her as their own."

"Certainly not, certainly not," cried Mr. Fellowes. "Had I thought such a thing possible I should never have made my offer.—But now, what about Sarah's own feelings in the matter? Have you put it before herself, Mr. Totts?"

"Yes, sir, I have; and she sees things as you and I see them. I at first expected that she would have been almost struck dumb at such an offer; but it was not so. She just looked very thoughtful when I mentioned it, and then she went up into her chamber, and I could *feel* that she was spreading out the matter before the Lord in prayer. Then she came down and talked the subject over as calmly as if we were discussing merely the pattern of a picture frame. Then she asked that my wife might be called; and when she was come she begged us both to give her our minds, and said she should be perfectly content to be guided by us in the matter. We asked her to give us freely her own thoughts; so she spoke out very plainly and sensibly. She told us that she felt that your offer had come from above, that she might avail herself of opportunities of improving her talents such as *we* could not give her: that she was conscious of possessing those talents, and that they were bestowed upon her

not that she might be proud and full of herself, but that she might with them 'occupy till the Master came'; and therefore she ought not to refuse this opportunity of making the most and best of them. And she added—dear child!—that no place could possibly be ever dearer to her than this her country home; and that if it was decided that she should leave it for a season, she hoped to return to it to gladden our hearts improved in every way, so as to be a little less unworthy of our love. So she expressed herself, and—”

Here the tears almost choked the worthy carver's utterance. Mr. Fellowes also could not command his words for a while, for he must “weep with him who wept.” At last he was able to say in a subdued tone: “Am I, then, to understand that my offer is accepted?”

The reply of John Totts was simply an inclination of the head.

After a while Mr. Fellowes continued: “I am truly glad, and trust and believe that you will have no cause to regret having put her into my hands for a time, but that I shall have the privilege of returning her to you benefited in every way. And now, pray understand me, my friend. While she is with me she is to be mine entirely, but not the less yours for all that. What I mean is just this: it

will be my happiness to provide Sarah with everything, just as much as if she were my own flesh and blood. Not one penny is to come out of your pocket for anything. Nay, no remonstrance; while she is with me I *must* be at all charges. I have plenty, and to spare, and I cannot put a portion of my superfluity to better use than by supplying the dear child intrusted to me with everything that she needs while she has a place in my home. And now, how soon can you spare her to me?"

John Totts again grasped his visitor's hand very warmly, and then called into his workshop first his wife, and then Sarah herself. It was finally settled that Sarah should join Mr. Fellowes in London on the Monday following John Totts's next birthday, for that birthday she *must* spend at home. So the carver and his visitor parted with many expressions of gratitude on one side, and of loving interest on the other, and with the assurance from Mr. Fellowes that he would be cautious in what he said on the subject, and would not set the neighbourhood a-gaping. With a firm trust, therefore, in their new friend's discretion, the three bade him farewell with hearts filled with tumultuous feelings.

At last the day fixed for Sarah Jones's departure arrived. Mr. Fellowes had told Squire Milvert that he had persuaded John Totts and his wife to intrust

Sarah to him for a while, that she might have the opportunity of fully cultivating her talents in London; and that all at the carver's house felt that she ought to go, and not to decline his offer. He also obtained from the squire a promise that, for the sake of the worthy couple, to whom even a short separation from their beloved adopted child would be a heavy trial, he would say as little as he could on the subject to the neighbours generally.

John Totts, his wife, and also Robert Mason, went with Sarah to the station. The most serious part of the leave-taking had been gone through, by Sarah's special desire, before they left the carver's cottage; for she particularly dreaded and shrank from anything like a scene on the railway platform. It had also been thought advisable by both John and his wife to give Sarah a full account of her mysterious coming into the family. Of course she had long been aware that she was not really the child of the kind friends who had treated her as their own from her infancy. But hitherto they had said scarcely anything to her on the subject, but had for the most part studiously avoided it. Now, however, on the evening before her leaving them, they called her to take a stroll with them to a secluded little nook, where a bank overhanging a little stream formed a perfectly private retreat.

And here they gave her a full and minute account of the way in which she had been cast upon their loving care ; at the same time telling her that they wished her to feel assured that she was just as dear to them as if she had been their very own flesh and blood, and that with them she would always find a home. On the other hand, should anything lead her to the discovery of her own real parents, they wished her fully to understand that no hindrance would come from them to her taking the position which they felt sure she was born to. They had the fullest confidence in her, they added, and were assured that she would just seek to glorify God in her future life, in whatever sphere that future might be passed.

“Did she understand them ?” they asked.

“Yes, thoroughly,” she replied ; “and never could she forget what they had been to her, nor wrong them and their love by seeking any other home. Should it please her heavenly Father to solve the mystery of her birth, and open the door into another home, she was sure she should be guided how to act, but her heart would be always in the old home, and with its dear ones, who had been even more than father and mother to her.”

The three returned to the house satisfied and thankful : and, when the leave-taking came next

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day, there were no misgivings, misunderstandings, nor heart-burnings on either side; and so when they came to the station, where many eyes were on them, one hearty embrace was exchanged between the adopted child and those who had taken her for their own. Then Sarah turned to Robert, and with a kind pressure of his hand whispered in his ear, "Excelsior!" Would he ever forget that word, and the sweet and compassionate tone in which it was uttered? No, never! But now the traveller has taken her seat, the ponderous engine begins to creak, and the next minute the long train has nearly disappeared. Is she really gone? Yes—and has left behind her on that platform three hearts brimful of a deep but not rebellious sorrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT.



BY the time Sarah Jones had reached the London terminus all traces of sorrow had passed from her features, and had been succeeded by a thoughtful peace. Of course she could not but feel a little apprehension at the thought of passing from her country home into such a totally different state of things, and that, too, among strangers. But she was, as she firmly believed, on the path of duty, and was leaving those she loved only for a time. So she was content, and smiled brightly on Mr. Fellowes, who had come to meet her, as he handed her out of the carriage, and felt grateful to him for getting her modest luggage duly placed on the cab, which was soon rattling along the great city's busy streets.


All was so strange to Sarah, that nothing left any strong impression on her memory, after the

drive was over, except the trees and flowers in a public park through which they had passed. These filled her with delight, not only because they reminded her of the dear country, but more still because they carried up her thoughts to God and his love; whereas the endless succession of streets and shops, and the crowds of passers along on foot, or riding, or driving, bewildered her with puzzling speculations on busy man and his various pursuits. Mr. Fellowes spoke very little during the drive, for he wished his young companion to be free to take in whatever she could from the new scenes through which she was rapidly passing. At last, as the cab began to slacken its not very exciting pace, he exclaimed, "We are just getting home, Sarah!"

To her great pleasure, Sarah Jones soon found herself stopping in front of a comfortable house, which, instead of facing a similar house over the way, looked out upon an extensive square, within whose enclosure of iron rails she could observe trees and shrubs, well-gravelled walks, and glowing flower-beds.

"Oh, how pretty!" she cried out. "There are real flowers, I see, and real green grass, even in the middle of London!"

"Yes," said Mr. Fellowes smiling; "and you will be at liberty to walk among them whenever you please."



"Oh, shall I? how delightful!" was her reply. But there was no time for more observations, for by this time she had alighted from the cab and stood on the doorstep. She would have lingered, and have prolonged her gaze into the square, but Mr. Fellowes, with a kindly word of welcome, now conducted her upstairs into a noble drawing-room, which looked out upon the trees and flowers which had charmed her so much. And now an elderly lady came forward and held out her hand to her.

"This," said Mr. Fellowes to Sarah, "is my sister Mrs. Vernon; and these are her two daughters, Norah and Nessida Vernon. I am sure you will soon feel quite happy and at home with them, for they have all got kind and loving hearts, and wish you to look upon them as friends."

Mrs. Vernon and her daughters at once assured their new companion of their hearty good-will towards her, and of their desire to make her happy. They were all manifestly struck with Sarah's appearance and bearing. The perfect neatness and good taste of her dress; the refined sweetness of her features, whose look of heavenly peace was rather deepened by the slight flush that overspread them; the simplicity and frankness of her manners, as far removed from forwardness on the one hand as it was from awkwardness or embarrassment on the

other, all at once assured her new friends that they were receiving into the family one who would prove a real acquisition, and not either a shame or a burden.

As for Sarah herself, her heart at once went out to Mrs. Vernon; and no wonder, for a more winning face or manner could not have been found for one who, like Sarah, loved above all things in her fellow-creatures a reflection of her Saviour's image and character. Mrs. Vernon seemed instinctively to appreciate this, and, gazing with pitying admiration on the poor girl thus intrusted to her loving care, drew her to her, and told her she must look to her as her London mother.

For a few moments Sarah made no reply; then, looking up into the gentle eyes which smiled kindly on her through tears, she said, "Oh, thank you, thank you; how very kind! Yes, I feel that I may trust myself to you, dear lady, and love you too, if you will let me. But, do you really know all about me?" she added in a half whisper.

"Yes, yes, all," said Mrs. Vernon soothingly; "there, let that pass, and come with me to your room."

"And these?" inquired Sarah, looking timidly at her hostess's two daughters.

"Oh yes, these are my two girls, you know," re-

plied the old lady, as she led the way upstairs, "Norah and Nessida. Norah is the elder; Nessida is two years younger."

"And do they—?" asked Sarah hesitatingly.

"Do they know all, do you mean?" said Mrs. Vernon. "Yes; and you have nothing to fear from them. I am sure you will find them willing to help you in every way in their power, and to make you happy." These last words were spoken as they entered together a beautifully furnished little bed-room, which looked out upon the square.

"Is this really to be my own bed-chamber?" asked Sarah.

Mrs. Vernon's smile said "Yes."

"Oh, how kind, how good of you, dear lady; what a pretty room! And, oh, that precious text!" She was looking with rapture at the words on an illuminated scroll over the mantelpiece: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

"That is Norah's work," said the old lady, delighted and touched at the great pleasure which the illumination manifestly gave to her new guest.

"And is she one—?" asked Sarah earnestly, and then paused.

"Is she one who has learned to cast her own care on Jesus, you would ask, Sarah? Yes, she is; and Nessida too, I trust. She is not so decided as

Norah, but still I believe her to be a true follower of the Good Shepherd."

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed Sarah. "I hope, dear madam, I shall get Miss Norah and Miss Ness—"

"Ah, you find that name strange. Well, so it is. She was called Nessida because she was born abroad, not far from an island of that name; and her poor father wished her to be called after it, because it was not commonplace. Perhaps," she added with a sigh, "it might have been better for her had she been called 'Mary,' or 'Jane.' Well, you were saying—"

"Oh yes, ma'am," replied Sarah; "I hope I shall get the young ladies to like me in time; and I hope they will be so good as to be patient with me, and bear with me."

"Never fear, Sarah. And don't call them 'miss;' they won't like it. You three must call one another by your Christian names; that will be much better."

Sarah expressed her warm thanks; and, on being left to herself, poured out her heart to God in prayer for guidance in her new and strange position.

In a few minutes there was a tap at her door, and Norah and Nessida Vernon came in and sat down, one on the bed, and the other on a little stool

near the dressing-table. Norah, the elder, was twenty years of age, and had all the appearance of a full-grown woman. Tall and graceful in figure, with a serious air in her noble features, she carried herself as one who expected deference from others of her own sex and age. Sarah Jones felt this at once, and yet perceived also that grace had enabled Norah to keep under control a naturally imperious and overbearing temper. Nessida, on the other hand, was all liveliness, exquisitely fair in complexion, and with a face the charm of whose beauty could not but be felt by all who came within the sunlight of its joyous smiles.

Sarah's first impression about the two sisters was evidenced to herself by the questions which, after a few minutes' intercourse with them, she inwardly asked herself. Looking thoughtfully at Norah, she said to herself, "Can I love her?" Then, turning towards Nessida with a timid gaze, she whispered, "Can *she* love me?"

Both sisters noticed her look at each, and Norah said, "You must look upon us as your sisters; we want you to be happy."

"Oh, if you please, miss," replied Sarah with a sigh, "I don't want to presume, or—"

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Nessida; "you really mustn't call us 'miss.' You must call us Norah and

Nessida. Mother and uncle generally call me 'Ness,' or 'Nessy,' but you needn't do that, at least not just yet."

"Oh, but," remonstrated Sarah in a troubled voice, "I really cannot call you by your bare names, at any rate not at first."

"Why not?" asked Norah. "We know perfectly well that you are superior to us in mind and cleverness, and that you will turn out a born lady some day. You are come here to do us good, and improve us; and I'm sure we need it, at least I do. As for Ness, there, you'll soon learn to drop the 'miss' with her; she'll soon make you forget that she is anything but Nessida."

"Well," said Sarah slowly, and almost sadly, "I don't know; I will try, miss. Oh, pray excuse me. But as for doing *you* good, and being superior, it quite pains me to hear you say anything of the sort. I am sure I feel my own inferiority to you both, and hope to learn much from each of you."

"Well," said Nessida with a charming smile, "you must begin by learning to love us. I don't think you will find that very hard. We've learned our lesson, that is to love you, already,—I can see it in Norah's eyes, and she can see it in mine,—so you must return it, and call us by our proper names, as sisters ought to do."

"I will try," said Sarah in a low and gentle voice.

"And you will soon succeed, I know," said Norah.

"Yes; and we must have perfect confidence in one another. You will trust us, won't you, Sarah?"

"Yes," replied the other firmly.

"Ah, that will be awfully jolly; don't you think so, Sarah?" said Nessida with a bright laugh.

"I am afraid," replied Sarah, "that I cannot say 'yes' to that. My dear father will never let any one use that word 'awful,' or 'awfully,' if he can help it, unless it is spoken seriously about something good."

"Just like our dear mother!" exclaimed Norah, while her sister's face became clouded.

The cloud, however, passed away in a moment; and, clapping her hands, she cried out with a laugh, "All right, Sarah; it was only an expression that every one uses now. I meant no harm; but you are right, and I will be more careful, and will try to be very proper."

Poor Sarah looked a little pained; but, feeling that she had done right in speaking as she did, she soon regained her habitual expression of peace, and shortly afterwards the three went down together to the drawing-room.

"I take it for granted, Sarah," said Mrs. Vernon, "that you will prefer tea to a late dinner"

"Oh, thank you so much," replied Sarah; "I am only used to plain country living, so that I know nothing about late dinners."

"And a very happy thing too," said Mr. Fellowes, who now joined them at the tea-table. "Happily for you we all dine at one o'clock, as a rule, so that you will be able to keep to your country habits. And now tell us how you left those at home,—my good friends, I mean, John Totts and his wife."

"Quite well, thank you, sir," replied the other. And this was all she could trust herself to say, all was so new and strange. Not that she was altogether ignorant of how people lived who occupied a higher earthly position than that which had been hers hitherto. She knew pretty much how things went on at the Hall. But to be in the midst of gentle society herself, and to be a very part of it, this she found it very hard to realize at first. Her new friends quite understood this, and were only astonished at the entire absence of anything like stiffness or embarrassment in her behaviour. Though at first she said but little, yet, when she did speak, her utterances were perfectly natural, and entirely free from anything like effort or affectation. And all soon came to see that there was as little of conceit, or self-assertion, or self-consciousness about her

as possibly could be in one placed so suddenly in the midst of such unaccustomed surroundings.

The meal over, Mr. Fellowes proposed to his young guest to take a turn with him in the garden, as it was now the height of summer. Sarah was delighted at the proposal, and was ready to join him in a few moments. As they strolled along the walks, Mr. Fellowes began a conversation by asking his companion if she thought she could be happy in his family.

"Oh yes," she replied warmly; "but you must give me time, if you please, sir. I am sure Mrs. Vernon and her daughters are very, very kind, and I hope they will be able to like me when they come to understand me. But all is so strange at first."

"True, Sarah; but you must just do as your heart and conscience bid you, and that will please us all."

"I will try, sir, with God's help," replied Sarah; "but you know I have been so differently brought up from the young ladies, that it will take some little time for us to understand one another, and I daresay I shall often vex them for a while by what they will think my odd ways. As Mrs. Grummerly, an eccentric old neighbour of ours, told me one day a short time ago, I am more fit, I fear, to be locked up in a glass case in a museum, and exhibited now

and then as a curiosity, than to mix with gentle-folks and accommodate myself to their ways."

"Nothing of the sort, Sarah," cried her friend laughing. "Just you go on as your own good sense and true refinement of mind shall bid you, and any little improprieties will soon fall off from you like the dry husks from some opening flower."

"Oh, thank you, thank you so much," said the other. "Yes, I believe I shall be kept right, if I look up constantly for guidance. But, dear sir," she added after a little pause, "I hope you will none of you think me strange and disagreeable if I view all things in the light of heaven. I really cannot help it. Old Mrs. Grummerly again said to me, as we were walking home from church last Sunday, 'Now you mind me, Sarah, don't be cramming your religion down people's throats at every turn. Ladies and gentlemen won't stand it. They won't be lectured into goodness, nor driven into pious ways by a lot of talk.'"

"And what had you to say to that, Sarah?" asked Mr. Fellowes.

"Oh, I hardly knew what to say just at the moment. But at last I just observed, 'O Mrs. Grummerly, I don't want to cram religion or goodness into anybody, but I must speak when my heart bids me. If I am ashamed of Christ or of His

truth anywhere, He will be ashamed of me when He comes in His glory, and I could not bear the thought of that.' "

"And what did she say then, Sarah?"

"Oh, she made some remark about there being a time for everything, and that the more we kept our religion to ourselves, and did not make a show of it, the more genuine it would appear, and the more good it would be likely to do."

"And you could not agree with her, Sarah?"

"Oh no, sir! I could never think as she thinks on this subject. I am sure I hope I don't want to make a parade of my religious views or feelings, but I am sure that I ought always to let my religion show itself or make itself *felt*. To serve Christ, to love Christ in all things, and to do all to His glory, this is the sunshine of my life, and all would be dark indeed without Him."

"I understand and appreciate what you say, dear child," said Mr. Fellowes seriously. "Well, you will find Mrs. Vernon and Norah all that you can desire, and quite one with you in these things. And so is Nessida too, I hope, down in the depths of her heart, only she is of such a lively turn that you don't at once find out what is really in her."

"Oh yes," said Sarah, "I can well believe that; and I hope you will all find that, while I do sin-

cerely desire to be not *of* the world while I am *in* it, and to do all to the glory of God, I do not despise lawful earthly pursuits and innocent pleasures. Indeed, I am come here, through your very great kindness, to make the most of such abilities as God has given me; and I trust that I shall be enabled to do this in such a way as to please Him, and, at the same time, not to wound, or grieve, or disappoint any of you, my kind friends."

"Just so, Sarah," remarked her companion; "you could not have put the matter better. And now I want you to understand me on another point. You are to look to me, remember, as God's steward to you for all earthly things while you are with us. Don't be afraid to ask me for anything you want. And just listen to Mrs. Vernon, and be guided by her as to your dress. You may be sure that we have no wish that you should deck yourself out in the height of the fashion. You will look better in the scriptural adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Nevertheless, it is only right and due to us that you should clothe yourself according to the station you are now filling; in fact, in such a way that your appearance when you are in company will not attract attention to you either by your overdoing or underdoing in matters of costume. The less conspicuous a woman makes

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herself by the style of her dress in either direction, the more truly ladylike she is, and the happier it will be both for herself and her friends. I see you understand me, so you may fully trust my sister to get you what will be suitable and becoming; and the bill will be sent in to me, so that you are not to have a thought on the score of the expense."

Poor Sarah knew not how to reply to this generosity of her new friend, but she looked her gratitude, and murmured something in the way of thanks, which more than satisfied Mr. Fellowes.

"Ah," he said, as they turned homewards, "we shall get on famously, I can see. To-morrow shall be a day of quiet at home, and next day I purpose taking you with me to the British Museum. But now let us join my sister and her daughters."

And how did Sarah Jones sleep that night? Better than she had dared to hope, spite of the almost incessant rattle of carriages and cabs past the house. The text over her mantle-piece, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you," was better to her than a pillow of down; and so, meditating on this text, and on a few special verses read from her own dearly-loved Bible, her mother's gift, she laid her down calmly to rest, and slept soundly till roused by the morrow's daylight.

Rather to her dismay, soon after breakfast next

morning, she was summoned into a small room to meet the dressmaker, and to give her opinion as to which colours she would prefer. Norah and Nessida came with their mother by Sarah's own request.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, when she saw the table loaded with prints and silks, "must I really have new things? won't my Sunday and best frocks be sufficient?"

Her tone of almost distress delighted Nessida, who clapped her hands and cried out, "Capital! capital! Why, Sarah, you look as if new dresses were one of your special trials,—in fact, a perfect calamity."

"Nay, miss," replied the other, blushing deeply; "it would be very ungrateful in me to look at them in that way; but it really seems to me that I should do very well without them, were it not—"

"Ah, I see," said Nessida; "you feel that you must do as others, and not be singular, otherwise, perhaps, we might accommodate your likings. There's an old flour-sack in the back-kitchen,—it will be empty in a day or two; would you prefer to have that for your best dress? You can slip it over your head, and Miss Green would cut a couple of holes for your two arms to go through; and you could have a cauliflower stitched on in front, and a

trimming of Brussels sprouts round the bottom. Wouldn't it be charming for you to go in it to the next zenana working-party at Lady Merville's?"

"What nonsense, Ness!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon; "you must not tease and puzzle poor Sarah.—Well now, dear child, we will not inflict any needless burden on you, but will only see you provided with what is suitable to *our* station, as you are one of us now."

Sarah looked up with a grateful smile, and submitted with calmness to the task of assisting in the selection of materials for her new garments, and to the hands of Miss Green the dressmaker. But how glad she was to escape at last into the morning sitting-room! Here, however, a fresh trial of her temper and patience awaited her. When she had duly written a long letter to John Totts, and had consigned it to Norah's charge for the post, she was surprised to find a large sheet of stoutish paper, accompanied by a pair of glittering scissors, laid on the table in front of her. Before she had made up her mind what was meant by the articles being so placed, she felt a couple of hands placed over her eyes, whilst these words were whispered in her ear: "Nessida wants Sarah to cut her out one of her beautiful pieces." Disengaging herself gently, Sarah looked up into the laughing blue eyes that met

her own. "You won't refuse *me*, I know," said Nessida.

"O Ness," cried her mother, "do let the poor girl alone; it is really too bad to ask her to exhibit her skill the very first morning of her being with us."

"Oh, it will be a pleasure to her, I know," was her daughter's reply.

Sarah smiled, and then, taking up the paper and scissors, began to execute what to the lookers-on was a marvellous work, as truly it was; for under the guidance of that girl's practised fingers the bright domestic tool made a landscape to grow out of the simple material on which it was employed—house, men and women, horses, cows, sheep, all exquisitely true to nature, were rapidly produced, the young artist getting more and more absorbed in her work. When it was finished, mother and daughters alike lifted up their eyes and hands in rapturous admiration.

"Well!" cried Nessida, "if I could cut out in that style, I should set up as artist on my own account, and have a studio all to myself; all the grand folks would visit me, and I should make my fortune in less than no time."

"And what then, miss?" asked Sarah gravely.

"What then, Sarah? why, nothing then, except

that I should have lots of fun, and do lots of good with my money."

"Are you sure of that?" Sarah asked again, slowly, and almost sadly.

"Sure of what, Sarah?"

"Sure, I mean, Miss Nessida, that you would have the will to do lots of good with the money."

"Oh yes, Sarah, I suppose so. I'm always wanting now to do a deal more good than I have the means of doing. There are such heaps of good societies, and such crowds of deserving objects of pity, all wanting money to help them, that if I could turn my head into bank-notes, my body into sovereigns, and my arms into half-crowns, florins, and shillings, I could never give all that I should like to do."

"No, of course not," said Norah laughing; "because then there would be no 'Nessida' left to give, —every bit of you would be gone into money."

Sarah could not help laughing; but soon the grave look returned. "Ah, dear young ladies!" she cried, "I am sure we are better as we are. I am afraid if I had lots of money I should be thinking more of my own than of other people's wants, and should soon be wishing for all sorts of things which I never think about now."

"I daresay you are right," said Norah thought-

fully. "Our dear mother often tells us that God estimates what we give, not so much by the actual amount given, as by the spirit in which we part with it, and by what it really costs us."

"True, Norah," interposed her mother; "and I fear that real self-denial scarcely is thought of in a great deal of our giving in these worldly and luxurious days. How few, I fear, give when in order to do so a sacrifice has to be made,—something, for instance, to be gone without that we intended to purchase for ourselves."

No one spoke for a few moments; Sarah looked very serious, and then, turning to Mrs. Vernon, said in a gentle voice, "Oh, then, dear Mrs. Vernon, I am sure that I am right in not wishing to make lots of money by my 'cutting-out;' it might prove a snare and a hindrance to me in better things."

"Well, but," exclaimed Nessida a little pettishly, "do you think, Sarah, that this talent has been given you for nothing, or merely for the amusement of yourself and your friends?"

"Not so," replied Sarah; "but, at the same time, I feel that I must be very watchful that I may use it to God's glory, and not abuse it by getting glory to myself through it, and so making an idol of it."

"Perhaps so," replied Nessida. "Well, what a

strange girl you are ! It's a very good thing that it is you and not I who have this talent. If I had it, shouldn't I just be showing off and exalting Miss Nessida to the skies ?”

Sarah looked pained, and, rising up, put one hand on Nessida's shoulder, and, looking her earnestly in the face, said half aloud, “ I do hope that you and I and all of us may aim higher.— Do help me to do so, dear Mrs. Vernon, and Miss Norah, and Nessida ; I am so afraid of getting conceited and puffed up.”

“ You, Sarah !” exclaimed both the sisters.


“ Yes, me,” was her reply. “ Oh ! you have no idea what a snare the love of people's praise is to me. I sometimes almost wish that I had no gifts of this sort ; but then that would be wrong—would it not, Mrs. Vernon ?”

“ Certainly, my child,” replied the good lady ; “ this gift was bestowed upon you to use and to improve, and none the less so because it *might* lead you astray. We are upon our trial here, and we have no right to decline doing anything, or exercising any talent we may be endowed with, just because it may require much prayer, and watchfulness, and self-denial on our part, that we use the talent rightly, and do not abuse it. Indeed, there would be both cowardice and ingratitude, and even

a subtle selfishness, in such a shrinking from making the most of any power or talent imparted to us by the Giver of all good things."

"Yes," said Sarah, and now more cheerfully, "that is just what my dear father and mother have said to me; and if they had not thought so, I should never have left them and my quiet country home. They believed that I ought not to hang back, but that I should make the most of such ability as God has given me, when, where, and how He calls me to do so. And so I have been sent here to improve what powers or talents I may possess as shall be most for His glory, and not for my own. I hope the discipline will do me good, for I see already many things as I never saw them before."

No more was said on the subject. Poor Sarah had hard work to keep humble and watchful; for her artistic skill soon became generally known, and a distinguished painter, who was engaged by Mr. Fellowes to give her some lessons, carried her praises far and wide. The noble and the great began to make inquiries about her, and to call on her and inspect her works. But as admiring comments on her performances from persons in high position had been no uncommon things during her country life—for Mr. Milvert's aristocratic visitors, who were numerous, seldom failed to give a call to the carver



—she retained her sweet simplicity and unaffected lowliness, spite of all temptations to the contrary; and proved to all around her the reality and strength of her religious principles, by manifestly being not of the world though living *in* it; and with her young companions she got on more and more happily as time went by, and as they came to understand and appreciate her more truly.

With Norah Sarah was in full accord. If at first the country girl's ways were a little distasteful to the London-bred young lady, the high and holy tone of Sarah Jones's whole life and conversation soon made itself felt by Norah; while, at the same time, Sarah's careful observance of any hints as to manners given her by her more polished young friend, soon effaced from the surface of her conduct anything calculated to offend the sensitiveness of those who had been used to move in higher society, and yet left her as natural and unaffected as ever. Thus, while Sarah learned from Norah to be more ladylike, Norah learned from Sarah to be more Christlike, and the two became firm friends, of one heart and of one soul.

Nessida, however, was not so quickly or entirely brought into spirit-harmony with her new companion. Sarah was charmed with Nessida's lively manner and high spirits as a rule; though some-

times these rather grated on her feelings. But she was convinced that she ought to make allowances for difference of disposition and character; and so the two were, for the most part, on the happiest terms with each other, though occasionally Sarah found it hard to understand and bear with Nessida, and Nessida was now and then rather oppressed by what seemed to her Sarah's needless scrupulosity. However, Sarah never allowed herself to be put out by anything Nessida might say of her disparagingly, half in play and half in earnest; and Nessida nearly always followed up any harsh or unkind remark of her own about Sarah by such a vehement outburst of self-accusation, and of approval of Sarah and her doings and views, as obliged Sarah to come to the rescue of her light-hearted, kind-hearted friend, and to take up the cudgels against herself. So peace and progress marked Sarah's life in her London home, and all around her felt that she deserved the love which she won from all who came really to know her.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER NEW FRIEND.



SARAH JONES soon lost all feeling of reserve or restraint with her new friends, and was able to fill her position in the family with grace and ease, and to the satisfaction of all. By the kindness of Mr. Fellowes she was put in the way of perfecting herself in all such knowledge as would be really of service to her, and of developing those talents with which she was so remarkably endowed.

One day, a lady visitor, who was shown some specimens of Sarah's exquisite handiwork, asked how she got on with her music.

"She cannot have got on," said Mr. Fellowes laughing, "for she has not yet begun to learn to play on any instrument."

"But, of course," said the visitor, "she will have to be taught. No young lady's education can be

complete if she has not acquired some proficiency in playing and singing."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Mrs. Vernon; "I think we often make grave mistakes on this subject. Certain accomplishments are declared by society to be indispensable in a girl's education, whether she has or has not any taste for them. Surely this is a mistake. Where there is plainly a taste or a talent for music, or drawing, or any other accomplishment, let it be by all means cultivated; but to force, as it were, a series of such accomplishments on all girls alike who are in the position of ladies, is, in my view, an injustice to them, and often a painful infliction on the circle in which they move."

"Just so," said her brother: "let girls learn what they have natural ability for, and not mere accomplishments, which they will never fairly *accomplish*."

"And yet," said the visitor, "how useful and almost necessary it is in these days for a young lady to be able to play a simple tune, and specially a hymn tune, though she may not be born with a decided turn for music."

"Well," said Mr. Fellowes, "there is, I allow, some truth in that; and I daresay Sarah will by-and-by pick up music enough just to make herself

useful and agreeable in that line. But as for taking to it as an accomplishment, I am sure she will never dream of such a thing, nor should I encourage her in it were she desirous of doing so."

"Ah, you take a rather severe view of things," rejoined the lady laughing; "and yet there is a great deal of good sense in what you have said on this subject."

So Sarah pursued her studies in the lines marked out for her by Mr. Fellowes and Mrs. Vernon; and also, by the end of another year, had acquired, under Norah's instructions, sufficient acquaintance with the piano and harmonium to enable her to play a hymn at family worship when no other performer was forthcoming. Beyond this, she made no attempt at musical proficiency. By this time she was also on the happiest and most familiar terms with her two young companions, calling them by their Christian names, and being treated by them in all things as their equal; while yet, at the same time, she always made them feel that she had not herself forgotten the inferiority of the station in which she had passed all her country life: so that, while she never shrank from giving her opinion on any topic under discussion honestly and fearlessly, nor from exerting her superior skill where it must throw that of others into the shade, she always spoke and worked with such

a tone of humility pervading all her sayings and doings, that she made both Norah and Nessida to feel that she understood that it must be somewhat of a trial to them to be differed from or even surpassed in anything by one who had only just lately come up to their level from a position of such obscurity. They marked this "poorness of spirit," and generous appreciation of their feelings on her part, and loved her all the more for it.

Thirteen months had passed away since Sarah Jones's first arrival at her new home, when one morning, at the breakfast-table, Mr. Fellowes threw a letter bearing a foreign post-mark across to his sister.

"There's good news for us," he cried.

"Good news indeed," echoed Mrs. Vernon with a bright smile, when she had read over the letter.

"What is it, uncle?" cried both his nieces eagerly.

"Charles will be home in a week, all being well," was his reply.

"What! Cousin Charles home from New Zealand! that is first-rate indeed!" cried Nessida.


"Yes," continued Mr. Fellowes; "his regiment has been ordered home, so we shall hope to see him, dear boy, in a very few days, if the Lord will. How rejoiced and thankful I am!"

Mr. Fellowes could not refrain from tears, for Charles was his only child, and had been now some years away. The prospect, therefore, of seeing him once more and so soon was a most delightful one to his father, especially as, since his leaving England, he had come out as a true and devoted Christian, mainly through the influence and example of a godly brother officer.

How all rejoiced when the slowly moving days had at last brought the week to an end, with a post-card inscribed—"All right. Home to-morrow by 3.30 (D.V.).—C. F." Punctually the cab drove up, and out sprang a tall young man in uniform. The next moment he was in his father's arms; then in his aunt's; and then, after a hearty shake of the hand to each of his cousins, he bowed low to Sarah Jones, who was introduced to him by his father. As he was raising himself up again his eyes opened wide as he gazed on Sarah's face, and a look of puzzled surprise rested on his features for a few moments. His father noticed this look, and took an early opportunity of giving his son a sketch of Sarah's story, and the reason of her being at present a member of his family. Charles Fellowes listened with the deepest attention, and evidently took a deep interest in Sarah, an interest which increased daily.

And how greatly did all rejoice in the young man himself! His handsome features, and gentlemanly and almost noble bearing, would have made him welcome in any refined company, and greatly charmed his two cousins; nor were they without attraction to Sarah. But what drew her most to him was the tone of deep but manly piety which pervaded all his conversation; for, while he was full of fun and life, he evidently never forgot the heavenly Master, whose devoted servant he manifestly felt it his chiefest privilege to be.

Of course his father and aunt rejoiced as sincerely in the Christian character which the young man exhibited in all his sayings and doings. But none were quite prepared for the marked attention which he paid to Sarah Jones, and that, too, from the first evening of his return to his home. What could it mean? That he should treat one situated as Sarah was with courtesy and considerate kindness, after he had heard her story, was natural enough; and, further than this, that he should be attracted by her sweetness of face and grace of manner, and still more by her remarkable talents, and most of all by her evidently genuine and unaffected piety, was equally natural. But there was something more than all this in his admiring and absorbing notice of her. He must have some special reason



for his marked and almost deferential attention to her, independent of any impression made upon him by her sayings and doings.

There was some mystery in the matter, it would seem. At last it came out when he had been at home about a fortnight. Sarah and the two Misses Vernon were spending the day with a friend of Mr. Fellowes's, so that the young man found himself alone with his father and aunt at their early dinner. No sooner was the meal finished than Charles Fellowes begged for half an hour's attention by his father and Mrs. Vernon to something of importance which he wished to communicate to them alone. Gladly did they listen while he spoke as follows:—

“Of course, my dear father and aunt, you cannot have failed to notice the deep interest I have been taking in Sarah Jones, as she is called, ever since I first saw her. I am going to show you that I have good reason for taking this extraordinary interest in her. I must ask a patient hearing for a rather long story, but I know that it will command your best attention.

“When I had found peace in Christ fully myself, through God's blessing on the loving words and example of my dear friend Major Barton, I felt that I must try to be of use to others in the same line, as opportunity might be presented. I was

but a timid Christian at first, but I gained strength and courage to speak for the Master as I persevered. Now it so happened that a lady and gentleman of peculiarly pleasing appearance and manners came upon me one afternoon as I was taking a turn by myself in a lonely spot, about half a mile off from my quarters. This was just about a year ago. They wanted direction which I was able to give them; but, before they went on their way, we fell into general conversation for a few minutes. Curiously enough, it came out that they were old friends of Mr. Milvert's, but had neither seen him nor heard anything of him for years. I made some remark about 'the better land,' which seemed to touch them; and then I noticed a deep shade of sadness resting on the features of both. I tried to say something to lead them into the 'way of peace;' but the only response was a profound sigh on the gentleman's part and a burst of tears on the lady's.

"We soon parted: but I felt such an interest in them, such a strong and almost painful feeling of compassion for them, such an earnest desire to get them to lay their burden, whatever it might be, where alone it could be *left*, that I managed to see more of them, and to engage them in religious conversation on several occasions, till at last they began to seek *me*; and I had at length the unspeakable

happiness of hearing from their own lips that they had been both led to their loving Saviour, through the divine blessing on my poor efforts for their good, —and now they wished me to know all about their special sorrow.

“Their names are Sir Edward and Lady Manton. He is a baronet, and she comes of an old aristocratic stock. They are by no means young now, but not what is commonly called aged. Circumstances, which I need not now dwell upon, had led them to travel a good deal during the early years of their married life. It was about eighteen years ago that they were on a tour through France, when their first, and indeed only child, was born. All went on well for about five weeks, when, one morning, both the child and its nurse were missing. The woman had taken the baby from its mother at the usual hour, to dress and to feed it. The baronet and his wife came down to breakfast in due time, but the baby and its nurse were nowhere to be seen or heard of. The woman was one whom they so thoroughly trusted, and of whom they had so high an opinion, that they could not for some time believe that she had in any way acted wrongly by the child. Perhaps she had taken it out for an early walk, as the weather was very fine and pleasant, and had been tempted to prolong her

stroll far beyond what she had at all thought of at first. But no—hour after hour passed on, and neither nurse nor infant turned up. At last a countrywoman came forward and declared that she had seen the body of a baby being hurried along on the river, which had been swollen by some heavy rain that had fallen a day or two previously. She called the attention of some men to what she had seen, but it was too late; the child had disappeared, and must have been carried out to sea. Not far from the spot where she saw the child she picked up a pink rosette, which might have formed part of the baby's dress, and this she gave to the poor mother. Yes; it had belonged to her child! But where was the nurse? Had she fallen into the river and been drowned? No one could tell. Every search was immediately made; the river was dragged; boats put out to sea in search for the bodies. The police made all efforts to trace the missing ones, dead or alive, but to no purpose. And so, from that day to this, Sir Edward and his wife have neither seen nor heard anything of their child.

“The poor parents got the matter kept as quiet as possible. They did not wish their loss to be made a subject for idle gossip. So they lived on in their quiet retreat almost heart-broken, and getting,

if possible, more and more hopeless every day. And yet a strong conviction has never left either father or mother that their child is, or at any rate may be, yet alive. They can recall some circumstances which make them fear that the nurse was under the influence of a base Italian, who had been lately dismissed summarily by the baronet from his situation of valet for repeated acts of dishonesty. They think it possible that, in revenge for his dismissal, the base-hearted man induced the nurse to make off with the baby, and that both the woman and the child may yet be living somewhere. The story about the floating body, they think, may have been a part of the man's deceptive scheme—the woman who told it having been bribed to be an accomplice, and having been furnished with the rosette that her tale might be credited.

“Such is the account given me by the baronet and his lady of their great sorrow, with many tears. And now, what has this story to do with Sarah Jones? Simply this: the moment my eyes rested on her, I was struck with her remarkable likeness both to Sir Edward Manton and his wife, more especially the latter. There can be no doubt about it. Then the age corresponds; and Sarah's history, as you have told it me, dear father, just fits in. I cannot doubt that Sarah Jones is none other than

the missing and long-mourned child of my poor friends. Proofs will no doubt come up in due time; but, in the meanwhile, I must beg of you both to say nothing to any one except Norah and Nessida about what I have told you, and the conclusion to which I have come. Kindly also get them to promise secrecy; and, pray, not a word at present to Sarah herself. Now, I have had my say."

Both his hearers were, of course, most sincerely interested in his tale, and the more so because it led them to the same conclusion; that is to say, that Sarah Jones was, in all likelihood, the lost child of Sir Edward Manton. They agreed also with the young man that it would be wiser, at any rate for the present, to say nothing on the subject to Sarah herself. Norah and Nessida, when the secret had been disclosed to them, were of the same mind; only, at first, Nessida could hardly contain herself, and was burning to break the news to her young friend. However, all kept their counsel, and every day increased the strength of Charles Fellowes's conviction that he could not have made a mistake. And what a happiness it would be to him if he were allowed the privilege of obtaining the necessary proofs, and of restoring Sarah to her true parents! He resolved, therefore, to devote himself for the present to this object.

But now, as time went on, and he came to know Sarah and her views and character more intimately, he began to be conscious that a tenderer feeling towards her than a mere though deep interest in her, and anxiety to be able to restore her to her real parents, was becoming permanent in his heart. The conviction that his affections were getting thus entangled filled him at first with concern and almost alarm. But why should it not be? Why should he not seek her love? and what was there to prevent her returning it? Plainly he was not an object of indifference to her. He could tell that by the little cloud that passed over her face when he had to say that business would necessitate his absence from home for a few days, and by the radiant smile with which she greeted his return. And then, how thoroughly they were of one mind on the highest matters. Would his father object? Surely not to his attaching himself to Sir Edward Manton's daughter, could the relationship be established, and this he was every day more and more convinced might be, and resolved should be, though as yet he had not succeeded in getting absolute proofs of that relationship.

And thus it was that all the family began to see, in a few months after his return home in what direction matters were tending. And all but one

could unfeignedly rejoice. That one was poor Nessida; for she had hoped that herself might have won the heart of her cousin. Not that she had in any way put herself unduly forward, or sought to attract him by anything like a laying of herself out to please and draw him. Very winning indeed and attractive she was; and, had Sarah not been in his path, she would in all probability have become before long an object of more than cousinly affection to him. But she soon saw that the hope which she at first blamed herself for entertaining, and which yet she could not help cherishing spite of herself, would not be realized, since one in every way more worthy of him, as she freely confessed to herself, had begun to wind herself round the young officer's heart. Well, it was to be! So Nessida, with characteristic generosity and magnanimity, gathered up her hopes and tenderer feelings, and strove to hide every shade of bitterness or disappointment, and specially to keep Sarah Jones from suspecting that there could be the least sentiment of jealousy or rivalry on her part. Charles Fellowes could not help noticing a little of what was going on in Nessida's heart and conduct; and this led him to give her the utmost that he could give, which was his deeply pitying admiration and esteem.

To Mr. Fellowes, his son's evident attachment to

Sarah was a matter of profound satisfaction. That she was in every way worthy, and even more than worthy of his son, he had not the slightest doubt. And even should her true parentage never be established, he was satisfied of its reality, and that she would prove to his son all that could be desired in a wife.

As for Sarah herself, she became every day more conscious that her love was being sought, and was being given. Charles Fellowes was just such an one as she could feel herself able to love. She could look up to him. As she listened to his descriptions of foreign lands, their peoples, and their productions, she was charmed by hearing what was as interesting as it was new to her. Hitherto she had acquired but very little knowledge on these subjects; an imperfect old copy of Anson's Voyage, and an equally mutilated edition of Captain Cook's Voyages, had formed the bulk of her reading on these topics. But neither of these works had taken much hold upon her. But now it was different. When listening to Charles Fellowes as he described the tropical lands he had visited, and the manners and customs of their inhabitants, she felt that she was acquiring valuable knowledge from one who was capable of imparting it in the most interesting way, speaking as he did of

what he had himself seen and heard. Not the bare narrative, but the conclusions which he drew from what he had himself witnessed in distant regions of the Earth, made her feel that she was gathering real and solid instruction from one who was well qualified to impart it, and to whom she could look up as to one who viewed all things in a light in which mere ordinary observers were little wont to contemplate things. Therefore, in the mutual attachment springing up between them, whose daily growth she could not be unaware of, a new sunshine was dawning upon her life—a sunshine which she could not wish to quench. And yet she was not quite sure that it was not her duty to Mr. Fellowes, her kind benefactor, to endeavour to quench it. Ought she either directly or indirectly to encourage his son to entangle his affections with one who had been born and brought up in so inferior a position in life till just lately? And what would John Totts and his wife say? What would they consider to be her duty? However, so far no avowal of attachment had been made by the young man, and perhaps might not be made after all. Worldly prudence and expediency might weigh down the scale which held Charles Fellowes's heart.

But the young man had no such misgivings. Every day made him more anxious to secure to

himself her who had become to him unspeakably precious. So, one morning at the breakfast-table, he said, with a pleasant smile, "What do you say, Norah, Nessida, Sarah, to a trip to Richmond to-morrow afternoon? I shall be most happy and proud to have the honour of escorting you. We can have a row, too, on the Thames, as I have some very nice friends at Richmond who have a boat of their own, and would be most happy to join us."

All his young friends received his invitation with beaming smiles. "Won't that be charming?" cried Norah. Nessida would have expressed her assent by exclaiming, "Awfully charming!" but she checked herself, and contented herself by saying, "First-rate! What a kind cousin Charles!" Then, turning to Sarah, she added, "You must take your sketch-book and bring us home some gems."

Sarah's smile had faded away and given place to a serious look, as she quietly replied, "It would be very delightful, and I am truly obliged to you, Mr. Charles, for proposing such a pleasant excursion, but I remember an engagement, so I cannot be one of your party this time."

"An engagement!" exclaimed all.—"I am sorry for that," said the young man, in a disappointed tone.—"Oh, you must put it off and go with us," cried Nessida.

Sarah shook her head.

"What engagement can you have which cannot be put off?" again cried Nessida. "Oh, I know," she added: "you have been invited to meet the nine Muses at four o'clock tea, and they've asked Apollo to make one of the party and to bring his lyre with him. What are we to do?"

Sarah looked partly amused and partly pained. Then she said, "I promised to go to-morrow afternoon and read to little Johnny Price at the hospital."

"Oh, is that all?" exclaimed Nessida. "You can go to him another day. Just send a post-card to the hospital nurse. I am sure the dear little fellow would be the last to wish you to give up, on his account, such a treat of a holiday—he is so unselfish."

"I know that, dear Nessida," said Sarah sadly; "but I dare not put pleasure before duty."

"Oh, it's not exactly duty," said the other peevishly; "he's always in his little bed, and one day will do for him as well as another."

"Yes, Nessida, that may be," was Sarah's reply; "but one day would not do as well for me as another. I could not disappoint him. Oh, if you only knew how the poor little suffering child welcomes my coming! I should be haunted by his patient face

all the afternoon if I did not go to him. And, besides, I must be faithful—a promise must be kept. How often have I heard my dear father speak of the importance of faithfulness in these lax days, faithfulness in our work, and to our word. I dare not break my promise to little Johnny, though I should have enjoyed the holiday so much. Dear Norah and Nessida, you must go and enjoy it for me.”

“You are right, perfectly right,” said Charles Fellowes, with a look towards Sarah of mingled admiration, love, and respect. “So we will put off our trip to Richmond, but only for a day or so; and instead, I will be your companion, Sarah, to the hospital to-morrow, and will say a word or two to little Johnny, if you will let me.”

Norah and Nessida at once acquiesced—Norah with a willing mind, Nessida with a little bit of a shrug in her eyebrows. Sarah hesitated for a moment, and then consented to have Charles Fellowes as her companion in her visit to the hospital.

The visit was duly paid on the morrow; and the child's eyes brightened and then overflowed with tears as Charles Fellowes talked lovingly and cheerily to him, and led him on from earthly to heavenly things. As they neared home, the young

man asked Sarah to take a turn with him in one of the parks. She complied after a little hesitation; and then, during that short walk, he declared his attachment to her, and begged her to assure him that he had not been mistaken in believing that she was able to return the attachment. What could she say? She knew that they were one in aim, hope, and faith, as well as in tastes. She could not profess coldness or indifference, and yet she felt that she had others to consider as well as Charles and herself. So she held out her hand to him and said, "I cannot deny that my heart is yours, but more than that I must not say till I have seen my dear old father and mother, and told them all and have known their mind."

With this avowal Charles Fellowes had to be content for the present.

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT TO THE OLD FOLKS.



THE visit to the old people was soon paid. Sarah, happier as she was becoming every day in her London home, could not help longing from time to time for a sight of the dear old country place where all her early years had been spent, and for a good long talk with those whom she had known and loved as parents. And now she had a special reason for desiring to see John Totts and his wife without delay. So a visit was speedily paid.


Sarah was met by both the carver and his wife at the station. John had hired a light spring-cart from one of his neighbours, so Sarah Jones drove to her country home very comfortably, and reached it full of life and spirits. There could be no doubt as to her delight in meeting again with those who had for so many years taken such loving care of her. And how rejoiced were they to find her just the same in

warmth of heart and outspoken affection. And how improved she was in appearance and bearing! They could not help rejoicing in this also, for they felt that she was becoming better suited to fill the place which they were persuaded she would be called upon to fill sooner or later.

As soon as tea was over Mrs. Grummerly stepped in. Sarah welcomed her cordially as an old friend. Not so John Totts and his wife, who heartily wished her somewhere else. But the old woman, though she saw this, cared little for it. So long as it was a pleasure to herself to come she was satisfied.

"Well, Miss Jones," she remarked after a long and minute scrutiny of the new-comer, "I suppose I mustn't call you 'Sarah' any more, for you have grown to be sure, and look for all the world like a born lady, as I daresay you are. So you know what London life is now; and how do you like it?"

"Why, Mrs. Grummerly," replied the other smiling, "I hope London has not made me forget old friends. You needn't be afraid of calling me 'Sarah'—London life has not made me ashamed of my old homely name. But I have lived there with such kind friends, and have had such delightful opportunities of studying curious and beautiful works of art, that I should be very ungrateful if I did not prize and be thankful for such privileges."



"Oh, to be sure, you are right there," said the old woman; "there's nothing baser than ingratitude. I am glad you are not ungrateful to kind Mr. Fellowes."

"So am I, too, Mrs. Grummerly," said John Totts; "but more than that, we all of us here believe that it was the Lord who led our Sarah to London, and so she has every cause to be satisfied, grateful, and thankful."

"Oh yes," exclaimed Sarah. "I could never have been happy in making such a change, if I had not believed that I was just following the guiding hand of that loving heavenly Father who has promised to direct every step of his children's paths."

"Ah! no doubt!" cried the old woman; "but, come now, just tell me the names of the young ladies who have been your companions."

"If you mean Mr. Fellowes's nieces," replied Sarah, "the elder is called Norah, and the younger Nessida."

"Well! did you ever hear the like?" cried the other. "What will they call their children next?"

"Oh," said John Totts laughing, "that don't matter. How beautifully it has been said,—

'What's in a name? a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet!'

"Oh, Mr. John, one of your proverbs again.


Now, I don't quite see that. I don't quite think that a rose would smell quite as sweet to me if folks were to get to call it a turnip, or a carrot. I like people to call a rose 'a rose;' not, for instance, a *glory-du-die*, John, as the gardener up at the Hall called one of their roses the other day."

Sarah was much amused, and then observed, "Norah and Nessida Vernon are both as sweet as roses to me; but oh! if you could only see and hear their mother, Mrs. Vernon! she is such a charming and holy lady."

"Just so," assented Mrs. Grummerly; "and now I'll be going. You'll call upon me, Sarah, before you go back, and tell me what you've seen in London. So good-bye for the present."

When the visitor had fairly taken her welcome departure, Sarah Jones at once plunged into the subject which was of course very near her heart, giving John Totts and his wife an account of the return home of Charles Fellowes; of his character; then of his proposal, and of her own conditional acceptance of it.

What could they say? It was plain enough to them that Sarah's heart was already given to the young man, and they were quite satisfied as to Charles's Christian profession and practice as described by Sarah herself. And if Mr. Fellowes's



father was willing, what could they say against the engagement? As it was clearly a matter of affection with both the young people, why should John and his wife put a hindrance in the way? They would not and could not. So they told Sarah in the most loving way that they believed it to be the Lord's will that there should be this engagement, and that their will was one with His.

How earnestly did she thank them for the kindness with which they took her disclosure, and gave their consent and approval to her engagement to Charles Fellowes; at the same time assuring them that no change in her outward circumstances and condition should ever make any change in her feelings towards them. To her they would always be the dear father and mother as long as they lived, ay, and in the better land too. "Mr. Charles Fellowes must run down here and see you himself," she said, "and then he will tell you, no doubt, many things which I cannot; but he would be the last person to try to draw away my heart from yourselves, and my dear country home where I first learned to know and love my Saviour, and to find that there can be no real or lasting happiness without His guidance and presence."

CHAPTER XVI.

AIMING HIGHER.



WHILE Sarah Jones was making the disclosure mentioned in the last chapter, she could not help suspecting that she was being listened to by ears which she had not intended to receive that disclosure. Robert Mason had heard every word! He had not the least wish to play the part of a spy, or to act in any underhand or deceitful way. The simple fact was that as he was going upstairs to seek for some book, which his master had told him he might look for, he overheard a word or two from Sarah which chained him to the spot; so that he listened on with hushed breath, forgetting everything else, and thus became acquainted with the mutual attachment between Charles Fellowes and Sarah Jones. Poor Robert! the discovery affected him as though some malignant being had suddenly crushed his heart together. He groaned aloud, and then,

flinging himself on a bed, tried his utmost to control his emotion, but with little success.

Sarah heard his groaning and weeping, and was greatly distressed at it; for she at once divined the cause, as did John Totts and his wife. At last, looking earnestly at her companions, Sarah whispered, "Leave him to me." Then, putting her finger on her lips, she slipped out of the room, and going to the foot of the stairs, called in a low tone more than once, "Robert, Robert." The poor young man, having obtained some mastery over his feelings, came gently down, and followed Sarah as she led the way into the field that led to the workshop.

"O Sarah, Sarah!" he exclaimed, and yet hardly able to utter the words; "oh, do forgive me. I couldn't help it. I didn't mean to be a sneaking listener, but I heard. Oh, do forgive me!"

She placed her hand kindly on his arm, and then, as he walked by her side up and down the little path, spoke to him in a gentle voice as follows:—

"Poor Robert, I understand it all, and quite acquit you of any intention to wrong or grieve me. But I want you to aim higher."

He looked puzzled and surprised.

"Yes," she continued, "I want you to aim higher. I have a sincere regard for you, Robert, and want

you to be really happy; only it cannot be in the way that you would wish, at least not with me. You know that. But still, why should you not be happy? You have learned to know that there can be no true happiness for any one who is not a genuine and faithful servant and disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, on the other hand, that no one who is heartily working for Him, and walking by grace in His steps, can be really unhappy. You do know that, Robert?"

"Yes, Sarah," was his reply; "you have taught me that, or perhaps I should rather say that the Lord has taught it me through yourself. Yes, I do know in a measure that in His paths there is peace, and that in keeping of His commandments there is great reward. But—"

"Ah, never mind the 'but,' Robert. What I want to persuade you to do is to look higher. You have not forgotten my parting word which I left with you when I went to London—'Excelsior'?"

"I shall never forget it, nor the time when it was spoken, as long as I live, Sarah."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Robert; but I want to see you living it too. Now pray bear with me if I just tell you a little more fully what I mean. It will be 'Excelsior' with you if you are moved and swayed by what Dr. Chalmers calls 'the

expulsive power of a new affection ;' that means, of course, in your case, by the love of Christ. Now, I will speak out plainly. You have come to be aware that my heart, as far as earthly affection is concerned, is given to another. Nay, don't give way to these terrible sighs ; it cannot be otherwise. But, then, do just lay yourself out to find your happiness in the self-renouncing service of your Saviour, and you will soon lose the weight that now burdens your spirit. Just try to get hold of some one to do special good to, to win from the world and draw to Christ, and you will experience the truest and purest happiness in such a work. And then, why should you not get a scholarship at one of the colleges in Oxford, and become at last a clergyman ? Oh, it would be a proud and a happy day to me, and indeed to us all, the day of your ordination !"

"Would it really, Sarah ? Ah, well, you are right. I will try. You have put before me a noble ambition. Yes ; I will not forget 'Excelsior.' And I see another bright thing too in the distance, but I won't say anything about that now. Time will show ; and all will be ordered for the best."

"O Robert, how glad I am to hear you speaking in this way. Yes, think of those gracious words, 'My times are in thy hand.' Only look

upward, and aim high enough, and you will not fail to be happy. And you know, Robert, that we must be prepared to meet with disappointments here. But what a blessing it will be, as I heard a good minister say a few days ago, if we can only change the letter '*d*' at the beginning of the word 'disappointments' into an '*h*;' then our disappointments will just simply be 'his-appointments'—that is to say, they will prove to be the wiser orderings of our loving heavenly Father, who is pledged to make '*all* things work together for good to those who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' Now, will you not endeavour to look at the Lord's dealings with you in your present disappointment in this light?"

"Yes, with God's help I will," said Robert Mason seriously and fervently; and then he returned into the house with the cloud removed from his brow.

In a few days Sarah was to return to London; but before she did so Charles Fellowes came down to Stanford, which was the name of the parish and district in which the Hall where Mr. Milvert lived was situated, and had a long interview with John Totts and his wife. They were at once taken with his manly and gentlemanly bearing, and were charmed at his evident appreciation of Sarah's character, and at his manifest oneness with her in his religious

views and aims. So they saw that he was one not unworthy of her, and listened with the deepest interest as he gave them a full account of what led him to conclude that Sarah was none other than the long-lost and tenderly-loved child of his valued friends Sir Edward and Lady Manton. And when he produced a photograph of her ladyship, they were perfectly satisfied that it must be a likeness, and a striking one, too, of their dear one's own mother.

"And now, Mr. and Mrs. Totts," he said, "can you sanction an engagement that Sarah may one day, if it be the Lord's will, become my wife, as we are already one in heart? I mean, if I can establish by unanswerable proofs that she is really the daughter of Sir Edward and Lady Manton. If I can do that, and they should be willing that she should be mine, can you both say 'Amen' to this, and give us your blessing?"

John Totts looked at his wife with eyes filled with tears, and she returned the look as tearfully. Then the worthy carver stood up, his whole frame quivering with emotion, and looking up to heaven with a smile through his tears, cried, "Yes, we can say Amen; and the Lord bless you both, Mr. Fellowes, for we can see that the Lord's hand is in this. So take our hearty sanction and warmest blessing; and take also, Mr. Fellowes, my sincere

thanks to yourself for the manly, straightforward, and feeling way in which you have acted towards us in the matter."

So all was peace in the hearts that were gathered together round the carver's tea-table that afternoon.

Sarah had one other duty to perform before her return to London. This was to speak a word to the squire on Robert Mason's behalf. So she called at the Hall on purpose. Mr. Milvert, his wife, and Clara had already been made acquainted with her engagement by Charles Fellowes himself, who got them to promise to keep the news as close as might be for the present. He had also mentioned to them the probable parentage of Sarah, and the grounds on which he had come to the belief that such was her parentage. All this had been done at the express desire of Sarah, and John and Mrs. Totts; for they knew it would get wind before so very long, and they felt that they could trust in the discretion and kindness of the squire, his wife, and Clara, not to make a public or premature disclosure of the matter. So when Sarah called on the day before she was to return to London, she received a warm and sympathizing welcome from all.

"Might I have a word or two in private with the squire before leaving?" said she.

"Oh, certainly." So the interview took place in the library.

"I wish," began Sarah, "to say a word or two to you, Mr. Milvert, on behalf of Robert Mason, my dear father's apprentice."

"Well, and what can I do for him?" asked the squire.

"You know," replied Sarah, "what progress he has made in his studies. Now, I am sure, from knowing him intimately, and from having watched his character and conduct, that he might become a truly useful and valuable minister of the gospel, if he were able to go to Oxford and become a clergyman. I believe him to be just cut out for that; and I know that his heart is given to his Saviour. Now, you have, dear sir, always taken such a kind interest in the truest well-being of all the young people of Stanford and the neighbourhood, that I am sure any help you may be able to give to Robert Mason in the direction I have mentioned will be the means of encouraging and bringing forward one who will not disappoint his friends and helpers."

"I am glad," said Mr. Milvert in a kindly and serious tone, "that you have in this way mentioned this subject to me. I am quite of your mind about it, for I have marked Robert's progress in his studies with great satisfaction, and have always intended to

give him a lift to the university, as I feel confidence in his success. I think that he may soon try for a scholarship; and, if he get it, I will see that he does not want the means of going through the Oxford course to his B.A. degree."

"How kind of you, Mr. Milvert! I shall feel quite satisfied about him now."

With a light and grateful heart Sarah returned to London to gladden the hearts of Mr. Fellowes and his family, to all of whom her presence had become very precious.

A few days after her return Squire Milvert sent for Robert Mason, and had a long talk with him; the result of which interview was that Robert, with his master's full approbation, went twice a week to a private tutor provided for him by the squire, and was soon pronounced by that tutor quite ready to compete for a scholarship with a good prospect of success. While making these preparations the young man had not forgotten Sarah Jones's pleading with him to seek his happiness in trying to win some one else to follow the same Saviour who had sought and found Robert himself; and he did not try in vain.

CHAPTER XVII.

DRAWING THE BOW AT A VENTURE.



ROBERT MASON had but few associates or companions; indeed, when he was not engaged in his ordinary manual work, he was so occupied with his studies that he could find little or no time for holding friendly intercourse with lads about his own age, nor was he of such a disposition as to attract the young working-men of the neighbourhood to seek his friendship or society. This was no trouble or trial to Robert himself, for lounging intercourse with idlers was not at all a thing to his taste; so that he was never to be seen on Sundays dawdling at the lane ends with the young fellows who would meet before it was time for service in gossiping groups, many of them—and among these even lads not yet in their teens—smoking short pipes or bits of half-used cigars. On whom, then, should he try his hand?

There was one young man about his own age with whom he occasionally exchanged a few words, and who had a high opinion of Robert, because of his scholarship. This one was James Grummerly, old Mrs. Grummerly's nephew. Now there was but little in common between these two. In fact, Robert felt a sort of instinctive shrinking from Jim, they were so unlike in most things. And yet Jim wanted doing-good-to, and had a heart to feel, and soul to be saved, like any other young person ; and if Robert did not try to get at him for his good, it did not seem likely that any one else would make the attempt. For Jim Grummerly was very unpopular with those who were of his own age ; for he was full of self-esteem and self-assertion, so that most of the big boys and young men of the neighbourhood kept as clear of him as possible. Sometimes he was admitted into one of the groups of Sunday idlers, and would share a lazy stroll with them ; but, as a rule, he had the enjoyment of no other company than his own, and any advances on his part were met by the cold shoulder being presented to him.

Robert Mason knew all this, and coming across Jim one day a short time after Sarah Jones's return to London, he could not help noticing the poor lad's downcast and unsatisfied look, and feeling sorry for

him. Then it occurred to him, why should he not try to win Jim Grummerly into the narrow way? True, it was not a work much to his taste, but it would be real work for "the Master;" and if he succeeded, how it would rejoice Sarah Jones to hear of it! The thought kept with him by day and by night. He could not get rid of it even when deep in his favourite studies; so he soon came to the conviction that it was a call to him from on high, and, having spread it out before the Lord, became firmly convinced that he could not decline the work without sin, and must watch his opportunity to get a hold of poor Jim. The opportunity soon came.

Jim, as has been said, had a high opinion of Robert as a scholar; and besides this, he entertained a considerable respect for him as physically his superior in strength of limb, for he could not forget his experience of that superiority when the two encountered each other at the time of Sarah's distress in the hayfield. It was therefore a matter of both surprise and pleasure to Jim when he found Robert Mason seeking his company, and inviting him several times to take a walk with him after working hours. The subject, however, which Robert kept uppermost on these occasions was not at first at all to Jim's mind; but by degrees he became more and more interested, as the young carpenter

in a homely but loving and forcible way dwelt on the happiness of a true service of the Saviour, and brought forward his own experience.

Jim came at last to listen with rapt attention, and to show that the seeds of heavenly truth, dropped into his heart from the lips of Robert Mason, were taking firm and deep root. A change came over the lad which soon became manifest to all who knew him. The carver and his wife noticed and rejoiced at it. But not so Mrs. Grummerly at first. "Whatever has come to the lad?" she exclaimed to a neighbour. "Why, Robert Mason has just got all the spirit out of him. Once he knocked him down, and now he is knocking him up; for he will soon mope himself into an illness if he can think of nothing but these over-righteous ways." But after a while the old lady changed her tone; for if Jim bothered her a little sometimes by sitting alone reading his Bible to himself, instead of reading to her portions of the *Police News*, or of one of the yellow novels to be picked up cheap at the railway book-stalls, which would have been more to her taste, she could not help observing that he was taking that Bible for his daily guide. Now he would always speak the strict truth. Now he would be always ready to do her work and run her errands cheerfully. Now he loved to go to church with her,

and could remember the greater part of the sermon. Yes, the change in him was real. There could be no doubt of that; and as undoubtedly it was a change for the better.

"Well," she said at last one evening to John Totts and his wife, as they were walking homewards together from the house of God, "my Jim is greatly improved; and I have to thank Robert Mason and the Lord for it. It's very wonderful; it is for sure."

"Yes," replied John, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. I am sure I am most rejoiced and thankful to notice this happy change."

As for Jim himself, he did not know how to thank Robert enough. But Robert told him that he had got more than abundant thanks already in Jim's own happiness and changed life, and in having been permitted to lead him to the Lord.

Robert Mason, however, did not stop here in his efforts for James Grummerly's welfare. He had noticed that Jim had a remarkable ability for copying engravings. As for painting such pictures as that which he sent in when competing for the art prize, Robert saw that he would never shine in that line. But why should he not learn to be a successful engraver, as he showed evident skill in copying

prints with great accuracy? With this idea in his head and his heart, Robert talked the matter over with his master, at the same time showing him an admirable copy made in pen and ink by Jim of a landscape engraved by Woollett, which his aunt had borrowed for him to copy. John Totts was very much struck with the patience and ability shown in this piece, and took it with him to the Hall to show Mr. Milvert.

"And is this really James Grummerly's own unassisted performance?" asked the squire.

"Yes, undoubtedly," was John Totts's reply.

"Well, it is a wonderful piece of work as the result of patient labour," said Mr. Milvert: "he might make something of this talent as an engraver."

"Such is my idea too," said the other. "I think James Grummerly might rise even to eminence in that line."

"So it would seem likely," added Mr. Milvert; and then he said, "I shall be very glad to put the young man in the way of studying for an engraver, if he himself desires it."

Jim was charmed at this kind offer, as was also his aunt, who exclaimed the very next time that she met the carver, "There; our Jim's going to turn out something after all! I knew he had got this gift in his head and his fingers, and I've been glad

to see him amuse himself at odd times with making these copies ; and now it has come out."

"True, Mrs. Grummerly," said John ; "and I heartily rejoice with you in Jim's success and prospects."

And genuine success it proved. Through the squire's kindness, the young man was duly instructed in the engraver's art, and soon became a proficient in it ; and with the squire for a patron, was seldom unemployed, and was able to earn an excellent living.

At length the time came for Robert Mason's grand effort. At the examination for the Oxford scholarship, Robert's name came out at the head, and he was highly complimented by the examiners ; and as he began, so he continued his course, taking high honours at the conclusion of it, and duly obtaining his B.A. degree. But long before this consummation took place, he had, in one of his vacations, a most important conversation with James Grummerly, the substance of which we must now record. Mr. James, as he was now pretty generally spoken of, was very anxious to show his gratitude to Robert Mason for the good service he had done him, first and best in leading him to true peace, and next in being the means of his becoming an engraver. So one lovely evening in Robert's second long vacation,

while the two young men were walking together near the carver's dwelling, Jim said abruptly,—

"Robert, I've a great secret to tell you, which I know will interest you very much;—it's about Sarah Jones."

His companion looked both surprised and distressed, but merely said, "Well, Jim."

Now James Grummerly had not failed to observe in former days many little things which showed him unmistakably how Robert's heart was given to Sarah. He was also now, of course, aware of Sarah's engagement to Mr. Charles Fellowes; but he felt, nevertheless, that this engagement would not destroy Robert's interest in Sarah, and in anything that concerned her welfare. So on the present occasion he followed up his first remark by saying, "Robert, I have good reason for believing that Sarah Jones is not what she outwardly appears to be."

"Everybody knows that," replied the other.

"But *how* does everybody know it, Robert?"

"Well, then, Jim, what cause have you to know it better than other people?"

"This is just what I want to tell you, Robert. You have been so kind to me that I think I ought to let you know what I know, as I am sure you are about the best person to make use of the knowledge; and it will be, I am certain, a pleasure to you, if

by me—at which time our baby was just a month old—I have no doubt that he persuaded Mrs. Bosworth to take herself off with the child, and arranged all matters for her safe journey to England. At any rate, she and the baby both disappeared, and we never saw either of them again. Giacomo also contrived to get away, and I could never get at him any more. It seems pretty clear to me now how matters have gone on since then. You will have heard that a portion of our poor child's dress was brought to us—a pink rosette; and a story was told us by the person who brought it to us, about her having seen the body of an infant floating down the river. We believe this story to have been merely a blind, devised by the miserable Giacomo; and we are still of the opinion that the nurse is in this country now, if she is still living, as no search made by the police abroad could trace her or anything about her. She has evidently been in league with some one in introducing our beloved infant into Mr. Totts's family; and good reason we have to bless God that she came into such hands. We never thought that the nurse would deliberately make away with the child, or suffer any one else to do so; for she was passionately fond of it—at least so it seemed to us. So she took the course she did; which was one that satisfied Giacomo's revengeful

spirit, and yet spared the baby's life. The mystery, then, is in a great measure cleared up, and we have our own long-lost one in mercy restored to us."

After a short pause, Charles Fellowes produced the miniature set in brilliants, and gave an account of how it came into his possession.

"Yes," said the baronet, "that miniature is mine, and no doubt was stolen from me, and has now happily come back to its proper owner, and greatly strengthens the evidence that we have recovered our very child, whose loss we have so long and sorely mourned."

When all the guests had expressed their heartfelt congratulations, a footman announced to Sir Edward that a person, by name Mrs. Bosworth, desired a few words with him.

"Mrs. Bosworth!" he exclaimed; "is it possible?—May she be shown up here? This is just the missing link which will make the chain of proof complete, without a break."

By the squire's permission Mrs. Bosworth was speedily introduced. She was a comely-looking woman of some sixty years of age, and she blushed deeply as she courtesied to the assembled company.

"Come, Mrs. Bosworth, be seated," said Sir

Edward ; "you are just the person we want, to clear up all that still remains dark in this wonderful history of our recovered child."

"Well, Sir Edward and my lady," said the new-comer, "I am most truly thankful that you have come by your own at last ; and may the Lord forgive me for my wrong-doing in the matter."

"Tell us, then," said the baronet, "how it all happened ; and I am sure you will have our hearty forgiveness, for things have been very mercifully ordered for us, after all."

"You must know, then, Sir Edward," began Mrs. Bosworth, "that I have come up here to-night for the express purpose of making all things plain. I happened to be near the station when you arrived. I knew your face and her ladyship's in a moment, and felt sure that you would not be here long without inquiries being made about Sarah Jones, as she has been called all these years. I had no wish to conceal or keep back the truth any longer ; and so, having seen your faces, I thought it would be better to come of my own free will and tell you all, than wait till a regular fuss was made by the police or others."

"You have done quite right, Mrs. Bosworth," said Lady Manton, "and I thank you for it. Pray, then, go on with your story."

"I will, my lady," said the other, and then proceeded as follows :—

"You knew something of the craftiness and wickedness of that scamp Giacomo, but you can hardly have known how completely he had got me in his power. He professed, indeed, that he wanted to have me for his wife, and was always making me fine speeches. I believe now that these were nothing but cunning lies. But one thing I knew for certain, which was that he hated both you, Sir Edward, and her ladyship, and was resolved to spite and harm you in some way, as soon as his master had turned him off for his thieving. So he hit upon the device of getting rid of the baby. At first he wanted me to smother it in the cradle, but I told him that I'd smother *him* sooner. However, at last he so talked me over as to get me to make off with the child. He managed everything wonderfully well. He was as sharp as a needle about getting us over to England ; and when I got down here into my own country, the dear babe was just about six weeks old. Eh, surely I loved her as if she were my own ; and a lovely little babe she was. Now, I got my cousin, Mr. John Reeves the carpenter, to take us in. I paid him well, for I wasn't without the means at that time. I told him pretty much how things were, and then I said, ' But where

shall I find a home for the dear babe?' We thought and talked over it a good deal. At last my cousin said: 'It'll be John Totts's birthday on June 21st—the day after to-morrow. Suppose we just get the baby into his house, and put a writing on the basket that holds the child, that it is meant, baby and all, as a birthday present for him. He and his wife won't refuse it, I'm sure, nor take it to the Union, for they lost their own little one a while ago, and they'll look upon this one as a God-send; for, though I haven't got any love for either of them, yet I know they've got a warm place in their hearts, and that will make it so that they won't turn such a birthday gift out of doors.'—And so it was done. We managed, while John Totts and his wife were in their hay, to put the basket with the baby in it under the window in their first parlour, just about dinner-time. And we soon knew that all was right, for Mr. and Mrs. Totts took to the babe at once; and certainly they've done well by it, and I can only say again how sorry I am now for the wrong I did in the matter. It was all along of that scoundrel Giacomo. But I never have felt right about it. I never have forgotten, nor can I ever forget, the kindness of Sir Edward and his lady. More's the pity and the shame that I did not profit by their example and their efforts

to do me good ; but 'all's well that ends well,' and I trust that many happy years are before you all now. There's just one other thing I wish to say. I should not like any harm to come to my cousin, John Reeves, for his share in this business. If any one's to blame, and should be punished, it's me and not him. And now I've done."

Sir Edward and his wife both thanked Mrs. Bosworth for her plain statement, and assured her that the past was entirely forgiven to all the wrong-doers, and that they were truly thankful to her for the straightforward way in which she had now come up and told her story.—Well pleased with her interview and its result, Mrs. Bosworth retired, having promised Lady Manton to say as little as possible to her neighbours about her visit to the Hall.

After she had gone, how happily the remaining evening hours flew by ; but, before there was a general retiring to rest, Charles Fellowes obtained half-an-hour's private interview with the baronet and his lady, in which he avowed to them his attachment to their daughter, and her conditional acceptance of him. Oh, how they rejoiced at this disclosure !

"We owe," said Sir Edward, "our best happiness to you, under the Lord ; for you led us to estab-

lished peace, and we know that you will make our beloved child happy. Therefore she shall be yours, as far as we are concerned; and may God bless you both in your married life. We shall, of course, look upon it that we are not losing a daughter but are gaining a son."

"Yes," added Lady Manton; "we can desire nothing better for our recovered darling, so she shall be yours in due time; only you must wait a little, for she is but young.—And now, dearest Edward, will it not be better for us to acquaint our kind friends with the real name of our precious daughter?"


To this her husband fully assented: so, on returning to the drawing-room, Sir Edward and Lady Manton, taking each a hand of their child, came forward; and then the baronet said, in a clear, firm voice: "Dear friends, this has been indeed a day of joy, and gladness, and thankfulness to us; and—what adds to its brightness—we have evidently the kind sympathy of you all. But now it is as well that I should introduce to you my restored daughter under her right, that is, her baptismal, name, which is the same as her mother's. Know all, then, that this our child will no longer be known as or called 'Sarah Jones,' but will be addressed as Grace Manton;—and oh! do you all, kind friends, give us

your prayers that her life may be ever a life of grace, in accordance with the holy name which she rightly bears."

To this there was the reply from many of a fervent "Amen;" and then Grace Manton received the heartfelt congratulations of the assembled guests.

The next morning Grace Manton went down with her father and mother, soon after breakfast, to her old home, and introduced her parents to John Totts and his wife. Who could describe that meeting, or picture the gratitude of the baronet and his lady, as expressed by them to both those excellent friends of their dear child; or, on the other hand, the hearty thankfulness of the carver at the happy and successful termination of the long search for the true parents? How delighted was Grace Manton to be engaged in pointing out to her parents the curiosities and beauties of the old place, so dear to herself, and where she had spent so many happy days! Great indeed was their admiration, and cordially did they express it.

"And now," said John Totts, as his visitors were turning to leave, "I have just one word or two to ask you to listen to from me before we part. You must pardon me, Sir Edward, if I still look upon Sarah—ah well! you must excuse my slipping out that name—you must still let me look upon your



Grace as in a sense our Sarah. She knows the place she has had in our hearts;—she knows that she has it still, and always will have it.”

“My noble friend,” cried the baronet, grasping the other’s hand warmly, “do you think that we could for a moment wish it to be otherwise? Indeed, we should think it strange and unnatural in our daughter were she ever to grow cold towards those who have done the part of truly godly parents so lovingly to her. And what should we think of ourselves if we ever put any barrier in the way of your regarding our precious child as still in a sense your own? And I can assure you, in my own name, and in the name of my dear wife also, that you will always have a hearty welcome whenever you may give us the pleasure of a visit; and that you may call our Grace by the name so long dear and familiar to yourselves without the slightest possible offence to us. And remember, my excellent friend, that we shall expect you both at the wedding, which, if the Lord so wills it, is to come off in due time; for, indeed, I am sure that neither Grace nor Charles Fellowes would be satisfied without you both being present at it.”

“Thank you most heartily,” replied John Totts. “Yes, if we are spared in health we must both be there. And how thankful we are that she has given

her heart to one who has already chosen the Lord Jesus Christ for his Master and Guide! Such a marriage must have a blessing."

"Most true," said Lady Manton. "We are thoroughly satisfied of that, and most thankful for it; for we have known Mr. Charles Fellowes in days gone by as a true servant of Christ, and have cause to bless the Lord that he was made the means of doing us both good in lending us a helping hand on the narrow way.—And now, my dearest child, we must return to the Hall." So they separated in bodily presence, but not in heart.

CHAPTER XX.

SQUIRE MILVERT'S GOLDEN WEDDING DAY.



AND now the squire's golden wedding day was come. A glorious day it was—warm, bright, and genial. The park and Hall grounds looked their very best; for summer had smiled them into beauty, while art had done its part in the massing of gorgeous beds of flowers and variegated leaves. Right in front of the Hall, and well seen from a beautiful terrace which extended along the entire length of that front, were two narrow beds, shaped to look like staves. The ground-work of each staff was formed of a bedding-plant of a mingled tint of silver and pinkish blue; while around each staff was twined a scarlet broad ribbon, composed of dwarf geraniums, and terminated in a well-defined fork. The effect of this dazzling mass of colour in its windings on the right hand and on the left was most striking, and called forth the admiration of all who beheld it.

The squire and his friends having partaken of an early dinner, were all assembled at tea-time on the terrace, beneath which, at a short distance beyond the flower-beds just described, was an enormous tent, in which had been set up tables for a public tea, to which all the parishioners of Stanford and all the tenants of Mr. Milvert's estate and their families had been invited. John Totts and his wife, Robert Mason, Mrs. Grummerly and her nephew James, had had a special call to the entertainment. No one who could manage to be present was missing, and a happy time they had of it.

When the tea was over, and the young people had enjoyed many a hearty game on the grass, a great gong sounded a summons, and all the company gathered before the terrace, on which the squire stood waiting to address them. At his right was Mrs. Milvert, holding her daughter Clara's hand. Sir Edward Manton and his lady, with Grace between them, also stood near the squire. The two Mr. Fellowes and John and Mrs. Totts also formed part of the group on the terrace. Then Mr. Milvert, stepping forward, and placing one hand on the stone balustrade, spoke as follows, in a clear voice which could be heard by every one of the audience:—

“We—that is, Mrs. Milvert and myself—are

truly glad to see and welcome you all here, dear friends, on this our golden wedding day. You may, some few of you, hardly know exactly what is meant by a golden wedding day. It means the day fifty years since the wedding took place. Ah! dear friends and neighbours, when two people have been happy in their married life, as I bless God that we have been, surely it is a matter for the deepest thankfulness to the almighty Giver of every blessing when he has permitted man and wife to spend together fifty years—a whole half of a century. It is very wonderful, but so it has been in our case.

“Fifty years ago to-day we were married, and what a happy fifty years these have been to us! and I trust that they have not been unprofitable and unblessed years to our tenants and neighbours, among whom they have been spent. Now, you all know how anxious I have been to encourage merit in the young people of this neighbourhood; and we have some evidences here at this very moment that such encouragement on my part has not been without its happy fruits. I have only to point to our good young friends here, Robert Mason and James Grummerly. Robert Mason, as you know, has risen from a very humble position to a place of high Christian usefulness and honour, through God's blessing on his patience, diligence, perseverance, and

faithfulness. And much in the same way has James Grummerly climbed to a considerable eminence as an engraver.

“Now, don’t misunderstand me. What I have been endeavouring to promote among you, and as long as I live in my present position shall continue to endeavour to promote, is just this—to encourage merit and good conduct in every shape and form. But I don’t want or expect you all to become great or eminent persons—the younger ones of you, I mean. I don’t want to see all the young men and young women aspiring after earthly greatness or distinction. I don’t want every boy, for instance, who is now a farm labourer to be discontented with his lot, and to aim at being one day Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury. Indeed, I don’t want to see our friend Robert Mason here a bishop one day,—unless he should prove evidently ‘the right man in the right place’ as a bishop. But what I do want to see in you all is a nobler ambition, which is simply this—to do whatever you have to do in the best manner possible. If there are those among you who do not seem made to rise into a higher position, then I would say to such, Resolve, by God’s help, to be first-rate in the work you are called to. Let one say, ‘I mean to plough the straightest furrow.’ Let another say, ‘I mean to have the neatest

garden in the parish;' and so on. Do what lies before you with all your might; and then, if you are to mount to something higher, the way will be made plain for you. And never forget—what is a greatly valued view with our most excellent friend and neighbour, Mr. John Totts—that, as a rule, great heights are to be gained, in most cases, by little steps. And this has been most notably true of our two young friends whom I have already referred to, and whom we have all, and myself especially, good reason to be proud of. I mean, of course, Robert Mason and James Grummerly. So, my young friends all, do your best in what lies before you, whatever may be the work you have in hand; and be sure that you will never be without a friend to enable any, who may be clearly capable of it, to get up a step or two. Our country of England is remarkable for the way in which many of her most eminent men have got to their distinguished position, by quiet industry and plodding perseverance—climbing higher and higher by little steps. And so it will continue to be, and specially where the aim is to do whatsoever our hand findeth to do with our might, and to the glory of God; and leaving our future in His hands, and just ready to follow His guiding hand, day by day and hour by hour, —one step at a time."

see that now. There was a time when I used not to see it. I had unkind feelings in my heart towards him many a time ; but those feelings are gone now. The Lord has made me to be at peace with him. I respect and honour him, too ; and may he and his wife be yet spared for many a year to come, to be a light in their home for all the country round."

"Amen !" cried the squire ; and with a hearty shake of the hand the happy little party broke up, every heart being warm with a sincere regard towards the other members.

THE END.

